Unrecorded and Confidential Information provided by Mr. M.W.F. Abeyakoon, 29 October 1966.

In conversation with him, C.L. Wickremesinghe had said that the Land Development Ordinance was intended to prevent land falling into the hands of foreigners. On further inquiry I found that this was an allusion to Chetties and their ilk to whom villagers mortgaged their lands. Mr. Abeyakoon felt that this was an understandable policy in any country. In talking of the Land Commission of 1956-58 and their suggestion that the L.D.O. tenure be altered so as to permit freehold Mr. Abeyakoon again stressed that it should be with restrictions to prevent land passing out of Ceylonese hands.

With regard to my inquiry whether D.S. Senanayake had been on the decline during his premiership he was positive that he was not.

I stated that D.S. does not seem to have been a man who read lengthy reports but preferred to work through discussions; he was quite definite in disagreeing. He had found that D.S. went into matters thoroughly. In fact he read the Land Settlement Officers' diaries and wanted them to be interesting. On one he had minuted something to the effect of: 'might as well have issued a calendar'. There were one or two other officers who had got hard knocks in this way.

M.W. Roberts
30/10/66

Comments on Interview with Mr. F.L. Baker, 13 January, 1966.

Mr. Baker is far from senile and seems quite fit but he had left Ceylon in 1932 and been engaged in other jobs in the interim so it is not surprising that his memory is not all that vivid. A nice man, he was moderately candid. But he also struck me as having a very moderate mind. Indeed, he seemed to miss the point in many questions I raised, but I am not certain whether this is due to the inroads of age. On the whole I should think not; i.e. I do not think he was a very perceptive or able thinker.

He was in the Survey Department so it was natural that I should concentrate on matters pertaining to these matters. Here, his evidence on the work of the L.S. Department and the villagers' attitude to the L.S.O.s work is of some importance. I was also hoping to get something on the 1915 riots but, unfortunately, he was stationed in Jaffna at that time. I would not rate his appraisal of personnel very highly. His interest in political matters was little or none, but it is of some relevance that he took the Donoughmore Constitution in his stride without seeming to bat an eyelid.

M.W. Roberts
13.1.66

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Mr. R.G. Bartholomew's Answers to Questions forwarded by M.W. Roberts, 27 January and February 1966.

R.G. Bartholomew b. 28 July 1884

P.W.D. 1910 - 1936 (?)

Extract from letter: R.G. Bartholomew - M.W. Roberts,
27 January 1966

... I fear they are not of great use. I am in my 82nd year, and my brain will not work as it should do, and I find there is such a lot that I have forgotten. But I only trust that you may find at least a few points in my replies that you may find of use.

1. What are your impressions on the Ceylon Public Service? and, within it, of the C.C.S.?

Answer:
My impression of the Ceylon Public Service is that it was run in the very high tradition of the Colonial Public Service which had prevailed in the British service in other Colonies.

2. Was the distinction between the Civil Service proper and the other services extended into social relations? Was there much snobbery and social ostracism?

Answer:
I think many members of the C.C.S. were inclined to look down on members of the Public Service, especially those who newly arrived in the country. This is rather to be expected as I feel many members of the Public Service were rather a mixed lot socially. Personally I enjoyed many friendships in the C.C.S. such as Burden, Sir Maxwell Wedderburn and T.B. Russell.

3. If so, did it mar administrative liaison?

Answer:
I do not think administrative liaison was affected by social relationship between the two sections of the Government Service.

4. Taking British policy in Ceylon as a whole in the period pre-1931, did you feel that it lacked purpose, drive and imagination? Was there a policy of <u>quieta non movere?</u> Was there a tendency to preserve the status quo and concentrate on efficiency as an end in itself?

Answer:

I feel British policy in Ceylon rather failed to train the natives of the country how to rule. There was a tendency to preserve the status quo. The Ceylonese generally were unreliable by nature I consider, and it was hard to find any who one could trust.

5. Were Indian events and the spread of terrorism in India taken note of by public servants in Ceylon? Did you personally think about its implications regards Ceylon?

Answer:

I am unable to reply to this question. My position in Ceylon did not come in contact with this.

6. Were the temperance meetings regarded as seditious political meetings under the cloak of temperance?

Answer:

I have no knowledge of this.

7. Where were you stationed when the riots broke out in 1915? Was there any trouble in your neighbourhood? Could you describe the conditions?

Answer:

I was stationed in Kalutara on the coast south of Colombo. There was a certain amount of trouble in the neighbourhood, but I think it was rather exagerated[sic].

8. Were you called out to help restore law and order? Did you participate in or witness any occasions when patrols were forced to open fire? If so, can you recall the scenes and the reasons which necessitated shooting?

Answer:

I was a member of the C.P.R.C. and was therefore called up. As far as I know we did not open fire at anytime. On two or three occasions we were sent hurriedly to places where trouble was reported or threatened, but there seemed to be nothing serious. However I remember several Sinhalese were caught, presumably by the police, and were brought into Kalutara. Two young British planters, - one in the C.M.R. and the other in the C.P.R.C. - formed themselves illegitimately into a summary Court Martial, and, after a very perfunctory examination, convicted the accused persons to punishment by whipping. A long sloping board was fixed to a tree outside the Kalutara Rest House. The victim was bound face down on the board and was severely beaten with, what I understood was an African sjambok. We in the C.P.R.C. were made to surround the place of punishment, and watch it as it was carried out by the native police. These officers who were responsible were, I am told, severely reprimanded in Colombo.

9. Were the instructions given to patrols clear?

Answer:
As far as I know, yes.

10. Did you think that the riots were pre-meditated? Did they have anti-Govt. and anti-European undercurrents besides that of anti-Moorish feeling? If so, why did you think so?

Answer:
There was always rivalry between the Sinhalese and the Moors, as the former were usually in debt to Moorish money-lenders. But I doubt if the riots were pre-meditated. I do not think they had any anti-Governmental or anti-European significance.

11. Is it correct to say that the European community came to feel that it was a threat to them? If so, why?

Answer:
I do not think the European community felt it was threatened by the riots.

12. Would you say that the Colombo Police lacked the training, the backbone, cohesion or resources to handle this sort of thing?

Answer:
The Colombo police was a disciplined force under a most efficient Chief Inspector (W. Dowbiggin, later knighted). They however cannot be compared with our police in our own country.

13. Do you think martial law was necessary? Do you think it was necessary to retain it for as long as three months?

Answer:
I think martial law was necessary as the riots were over the whole Island. I doubt that it was necessary to retain it for three months, as I feel the trouble was rapidly suppressed.

14. Have you any idea - whether first-hand or through others - what sort of man General Malcolm was?

Answer:

As far as I am aware General Malcolm was a very efficient officer in command. But I do not think I am in a position to judge.

15. Can you recall what your impression was regarding the nature of the General Court Martials?

Answer:

Being in an outstation at the time I had really no knowledge of any General Court Martial.

16. What did you think of the drum-head court martials in places like Kegalla? What did you think of Sir John Anderson's condemnatory ddespatch on this subject?

Answer:

I cannot remember anything about the drum-head court martials. I have given you under 8 above some particulars of that held at Kalutara. If other places had similar, illegitimate court martials I, of course, would feel thoroughly disgusted. I do not recollect Sir John Anderson's despatch on the subject.

17. Do you think that Anderson was fooled by cases specially engineered and fashioned by lawyers?

Answer:

I am unable to reply properly to this question, but, from my reply to 8 above I should imagine Anderson's despatch was rightly most condemnatory.

18. Was he unpopular among public servants because of this despatch?

Answer:

As far as I know Sir John Anderson was not unpopular as Governor of Ceylon.

19. Was it known that the Moors brought false cases against many of their enemies during the riots - i.e during the post-riots investigation?

Answer;

My mind is a blank regarding the post-riot investigation. But realising how hated the Moors were - and rightly so - I feel fairly convinced they would bring up many false accusations against their enemies.

23. Did the rise of an educated Ceylonese class critical of British rule make things more difficult for public servants?

Answer:

I never experienced any difficulty.

24. Were you subject to personal criticism from politicians in Council or in the Press?

Answer:

No, not as far as I can remember.

25. Was this sort of thing widely prevalent in the late 1920's and 1930's? Was it more pronounced in the 1930's than in the late 1920's?

26. How did Public Servants react to these criticisms?

27. In addition, id they suffer from political interference, intrigue, wire-pulling and action over their heads? How did they react to this?

Answer to 25,26,27:

My mind, I fear, is a blank. I cannot recollect anything regarding criticisms in the Press or among politicians. As doubtless you know, when the new Constitution was set up, all the elected members of the State Council were divided into about five Committees which were placed in charge of different functions. The Chairman of each Committee being the Minister to represent his Committee in the State Council. Secretaries were appointed from the C.C.S. for these posts, except in the Committee of the Minister for Communications and Works. For this Committee it was felt that a technical officer was needed, and it so happened that I was the person appointed. The Ministry for Communication and Works had under it the Public Works Department, the Irrigation Department, Railways, Harbour and certain other departments which I regret I cannot now remember. I can only say that as far as my Ministry was concerned we all worked together most amicably. I retired about April 1936 partly for personal reasons, and because of alterations among Ministers.

28. What was your personal reaction to the new Constitution set up by the Donoughmore Commission? What did other Public Servants whom you were acquainted with say about it?

Answer:

As indicated above my reaction to the new Constitution was satisfactory. We, of course, knew that this was only the first step in total self-government, and I think the majority of British officials felt suspicious as to how we should be affected under it. I am sure many retired about the same time. I vividly remember one C.C.S. member accusing me of "deserting the sinking ship". My reply was that I would prefer to be the rat who deserted rather than the one who sank with the ship. I was not very optimistic about the future of Ceylon.

29. What was - and is - your opinion on the grant of universal franchise?

Answer:

I do not think the native was anywhere like ready for universal franchise. All he was interested in was something to fill his stomach.

30. Any comments on the Executive Committee system a la London County Council?

Answer:

As far as I know this sytem was quite satisfactory, vide my reply to 28.

31. Could you provide your appraisal of the following Governors:

Answer:

I am afraid, in my position, I had very little to do with the Governors of Ceylon. Sir Hugh Clifford came to Ceylon with a very high reputation from other colonies. His behaviour in Ceylon was a great disappointment, and I think many people in the services thought his mental powers were affected. Sir R.E. Stubbs, who had been for many years Chief Secretary before he was made Governor, was a very self-opinionated man and would not listen to any other.

32. Could you also appraise the following (since deceased) as men and administrators:

Answer:

I had very little direct communication with these officers. I knew Sir Graeme Tyrrell fairly well. He was a good Chief Secretary, but was inclined to strange moods at times. Fraser also was a very efficient officer. He married a German lady, which may not have helped him in his career. Socially I found him a very likeable person. Pagden, who was Postmaster General stayed in active service as long as he could, and I remember as P.M.G. a favourite remark about him was, "Paggy must go"!

33. Have you any comments and/or criticisms to make of the P.W.D. in Ceylon?

Answer:

The favourite remark regarding the P.W.D. was to call it the "Public Waste Department". I do not think it was a fair criticism. Dealing with native and unreliable labour was not easy. Our methods were, no doubt, old fashioned, but during the 25 years I was in it conditions in the country greatly improved. Main roads especially became more up-to-date. Certain officers who came out in later years for special duties found that new fangled ideas which they brought with them did not always work, and the oldfashioned system was more reliable with the labour we had.

34. I would also appreciate a description of and your comments on the system under which minor roads were built and maintained?

Answer:

The P.W.D. was not expected to deal with minor roads. These were maintained, if such a word could be used of them, by local headmen with village labour. They were, to my mind, merely dirt tracks.

35. How would you appraise the different Directors of the P.W.D. under whom you served?

Answer:

The Directors of Public Works, under whom I served, were, on the whole, fine and efficient officers. When I came out to Ceylon in 1911 Mr. Francis Cooper was D.P.W. and I count him as one of the finest. I forget the names of many of them. Mr. J. Strachan came out for the construction of the Colombo Lake Development Scheme, and after the completion was made D.P.W. W.J. Thornhill rose up in the P.W.D. and, knowing the difficulties under which his officers worked, was always a thoughtful and kindly Chief.

37. Was Macan Markar able to keep the Committee in order; i.e in some other Committees there was not only regular squabbling but the Chairman could not keep control and maintain order; did this occur?

Answer:

Macan Markar had a very well-behaved Committee, and as far as I can remember we never had any trouble. Two of our members - W. Freeman and W. Villiers - were Englishmen, and that possibly kept the Committee in order.

38. Were there many occasions when the Minister presented the Committee with some <u>fait accompli</u> and then asked for their approval?

Answer:

I cannot recall any occasion when the Minister carried out any fait accompli, though no doubt this must have occurred. But I am sure there was never any trouble in consequence. We held a large number of Committee meetings - I think once a fortnight - and tried to keep the Committee well informed.

39. Did you feel the Committee system provided some administrative training to politicians? Was it not cumbersome and partial to delay?

Answer:

I think the Committee system was of use as a training ground. It was undoubtedly a bit cumbersome. But with so frequent meetings I do not think we held matters up very much.

40. How would you appraise Macan Markar, Sir H.L. De Mel, H.R.Freeman, E.C. Villiers and D.J. Wimalasurendra, and Sir John Kotelawala?

Answer:

I found W. Macan Markar very easy to deal with. As you probably know he was the head of the large jewellery shop on the ground level of the Grand Oriental Hotel (G.O.H.). He, of course, became Minister of Communication and Works without having any inside knowledge or of any experience of Government work. He consequently was inclined to look to me in various matters. We worked well together. Of the others you mention as far as I remember, I had nothing to do with Sir Henry de Mel or Sir John Kotalawella. As far W.H.R. Freeman, he was an old friend of mine, and for years used to come and stay a night or two when I was at Anuradhapura. He was, of course, and old man and well passed his prime. He was greatly beloved by the Sinhalese of the Province which he represented and when he was elected to the State Council, no other person would stand against him. W.E.C. Villiers, who represented the Planting Community, was a sound man. I enjoyed his friendship. When Macan Markar went to England for about six months, W. Villiers was chosen as Chairman of the Committee. As for Mr. Wimalasurendra, he was perhaps more pugnacious than any of the others. He had been a District Engineer in the P.W.D. I therefore knew him. He would have loved to be Minister for Communication and Works, but I don't think I would have enjoyed working under him.

Mrs. R.H. Bassett's Answers to Questions forwarded by M.W. Roberts 17 November 1965. *

Extract from a letter from Mrs. R.H. Bassett to M.W. Roberts, dated 9 November 1965:

> I am afraid I cannot help you as he[1] left no papers on Land Settlement matters, in which dept. he was 6½ years and I went on every circuit with him.

1. In what districts did Mr. Bassett largely serve?

Answer:

The whole of the Sabarangama (I don't know how you spell it) Province, starting just outside Colombo and going miles beyond Balangoda. That stretch was 3½ years.

2. What were your own impressions of the peasantry in Ceylon?

Answer:

I thought the people in the villages, most charming and polite, fond of music, very proud of their children, kept their homes so clean and tidy, had plenty of chickens and dogs, and their bit of land in paddy and a few fruit trees, c.nuts and another kind of nut, well kept. The men worked hard all morning and slept all afternoon - the women worked hard. Very cheerful people.

3. Among other things, is it not correct to say that they were apathetic?

Answer:

I am not so sure that they were apathetic - if they had enough for today, tomorrow could look after itself.

4. Do you know, from Mr. Bassett's remarks, whether he found it easy or difficult to establish a rapport with them?

Answer:

Mr. B. found them very easy to get on with; they knew at once what kind of a man they were dealing with. He often said they were very fond of going to law over some very silly little thing.

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[1] R.H. Bassett, C.C.S., 1920-1948(?).

* This is a retyped version. It was originally typed in elite and copies in London and Oxford are in that form.

5. Have you any inkling of their reactions to the L.S.O. and the work of the Land Settlement Department? Was there any grumbling?

Answer:

They welcomed the L.S.D. and produced deeds out of old tin boxes hundreds of years old, that had been sold and resold many a time, or faked for them by some land shark. Listening as I so often did, I have seen 50 to 80 claims put in for about 20 acres on the Map, they all took their little bit quite happily, having asked for 3 times the amount of land on the map.

6. What were the tasks of this Department?

Answer:

The tasks of the Dept. were many, usually a Chief Clerk and peon went with Mr. B. for three weeks at a time on circuit, having prepared all they were going to settle at the Head Office in Colombo.

7. Do you know if your husband had found that villagers were alienating land (either theirs or Crown land which they used or claimed) to speculators and planters (Ceylonese or European) to their (or the village's) detriment?

Answer:

Very little grumbling was heard. If you could get hold of a book by Fred Lewis called '60 years in Ceylon', it may help you as he was in the L.S.D. for years, not as a Civil Servant but as an extra, there was so much to do. I often met him years later when he came before my husband with a claim for some Estate.

8. Did your husband try to prevent this sort of thing?

Answer:

It was so clear to them on the Map they knew they would never get away with a false claim. They had great faith in my husband and knew they would get a fair deal.

9. Was his policy oriented towards protecting village and villager and their lands from outsiders of this sort?

Answer:

Sometimes a shark from Colombo would turn up at the sales but he was soon spotted. He[1] always protected the villagers. He had a free hand to deal with the Map before him - sometimes as many as 50 maps were before him. It was very hard work and he often worked onto midnight.

10. Did he have the power to rescind such sales (where Crown land) and preserve it for the village? or allot it to individual villagers?

Answer:

Quite a number of large Estates had to claim so as to see if their deeds were in order; a few had to give up bits of their land. I don't remember any of the old names, but one Mr. Patterson used to come up from Colombo for the sales for some interested party. Why not try and contact Mr. Northcroft or Mr. P.J. Hudson; both were for years with my husband in the L.S.D. The Crown Agents will help with addresses.

11. Did he ever mention anything about these speculators and landowners and planters? Can you recollect any names?

Answer:

None.

12. Did he ever refer to the political criticisms on the Land Settlement Dept. in the 1920's and say that <u>some</u> of these politicians were landowners and speculators etc. who were being baulked by his Dept. and the type of work he was doing?

Answer:

He never had any dealing with Politicians as far as I know.

13. In cases between Crown and peasant did he give the benefit of the doubt to the peasant?

Answer:

I don't know the answer to this.

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[1] Obviously 'he' refers to Mr. Bassett.

14. Did the peasants reflect or feel the criticisms referred to in Question 12, vis-a-vis the Land Settlement Department?

Answer:

Always a welcome for the L.S.D.

15. If you were on circuit in Tamil areas I would like views (your own and Mr. Bassett's) on differences between the Tamils and the Sinhalese.

Answer:

Only once did we go to Kurunegala for a fortnight to settle land. He often had to go by Elephant to bits of the land for sale, for he always looked at every piece of land before it was sold or settled on anyone.

RALPH NORMAN BOND, C.M.G., O.B.E.

b. 31 August 1900.
M.A., Cantab.
C.C.S. 1923 - 1955

15 Dec. 1923	apptd. to C.C.S.
20 Jan. 1924	attached to Puttalam Kachcheri.
18 Oct. 1924	attached to Hambantota Kachcheri.
July -Aug. 1925	Additional A.G.A., Uva.
Sept. 1925	reattached to Hambantota Kachcheri.
21 Jan. 1926	O.A., Badulla Kachcheri.
15 July 1929	on leave.
10 Jan. 1930	P.M., Gampola.
26 Oct. 1931	A.G.A., Mullaittivu.
12 June 1933	A.G.A., Kandy.
6 July 1934	on leave.
4 Dec. 1934	A.G.A., Kurunegala.
1 April 1936	Landing Surveyor.
31 March 1938	Acting Deputy Collector of Customs.
14 Nov. 1939	Asst. Controller of Imports, Exports & Exchange.
11 May 1942	Asst. Chief Sec.
26 March 1945	Civil Sec. to C-inC.
8 Jan. 1946	attached to Chief Sec's Office.
4 Feb. 1946	Additional G.A., Western Province as well.
15 Sug. 1946	on leave.
26 Dec. 1946	Acting G.A., Western Province.
22 Jan. 1947	Additional Reg-General.
4 March 1947	attached to Chief Sec's Office.
1 April 1947	Acting Deputy Chief Sec.
19 Aug. 1947	attached to Chief Sec's Office.
1 Oct. 1947	Permanent Sec. to Minister of Posts & Telecoms. as well.
18 Sept. 1948 to 3 Nov. 1948	Acting Permanent Sec. to the Ministry of Industries & Fisheries as well. [And many such additional Permanent Secretaryships in next few years.]
2 June 1952	Permanent Sec. to the Ministry of Posts & Information [again acting as Permanent Sec. to other Ministries as well at various times].
1955(?)	retired.

Mr. R.N. Bond's Answers to Questions forwarded by M.W. Roberts,

1 December 1965.

1. During your work among the peasantry did you find it difficult to understand their particular 'thought patterns'? Were you able to convey your own ideas to them? Could you establish a rapport with them?

   Answer:

   My two years in the Wanni and the Mullaittivu district were very happy ones - though the work was hard and one was alone. It was a pleasure to be with both the Sinhalese and Tamil villagers, who were simple and lovable people. Two murders in two years is some indication of their peace-loving qualities - and then the accused admitted his crime. (By the way I succeeded R.S.V. Poulier, who had succeeded Jones-Bateman. My wife and I consulted Mr. And Mrs. Jones-Bateman before I assumed duties. I had no difficulty in understanding either the Tamil or Sinhalese villager. I had good Mudaliyars and a good Ratemahatmaya. A splendid Kachcheri Mudaliyar accompanied me on circuit. The R.M. was unique in being equally fluent in Tamil and Sinhalese - written and spoken. There were very happy, amicable relations between Sinhalese and Tamils, where their areas met.

2. Was there a distinction between the Tamils and the Sinhalese in this regard? Was there a distinction between the peasantry in Kurunegala and Kandy as against those in the Vanni?

   Answer:

   The situation in Kurunegala and Kandy was different, as the peasants were not so cut off as in the Mullaittivu District. The only Tamils were Indian Tamils on the Tea and Rubber estates, and they were aloof from the Sinhalese.

3. Did villagers in the Vanni pay coolies to perform their statutory obligations for service on roads or tanks, often or only at times?

   Answer:

   The Vanni villagers sometimes did the statutory work on tanks and roads themselves and sometimes employed coolies or commuted their labour by payment. They did not extensively employ coolies.

4. Where did the coolies come from?

Answer:

The coolies were Indians so far as I remember, though they may have been Ceylon Tamils. They were called 'OTTAI' coolies, i.e. individual coolies (solitary).

5. How did the villagers manage to find the money for this purpose?
6. Again, from where did they get the money to pay irrigation fines?
7. Didn't such irrigation fines and their improvidence in hiring coolies for the above tasks, etcetera, push them further and further into debt?

Answer: The roads and tanks were vital to the villagers. Especially the tanks, and we endeavoured to get the villagers to understand this. Work was 'called out' only when necessary - e.g. if the tank's bund was weak and needed raising or the spill was scoured. The work was not onerous. We always called the Vanni villagers 'country gentlemen.' They were very easy-going. They could readily have done the earthwork, but sometimes preferred to sit back and either commute or employ 'ottai' coolies. I was strict over the Irrigation Cases taken when they failed to fulfil their obligations, because when an A.G.A. had a reputation for meaning business the villagers exerted themselves and did the work or paid. The work gave them an interest in their own village works. Their money would come from sale of their crops or from their labours.

8. Did co-operative credit societies have any influence in reducing peasant indebtedness?

Answer:

Yes, the co-operative credit societies were excellent. The members could obtain loans at low interest rates (instead of going to the Chetty) and each member could see that the members who obtained loans had reasonable security and repaid the loans when their crops were reaped.

9. Who succeeded W.K.H. Campbell? Would you give your own

appraisal of him (i.e. his successor)?

Answer:

I cannot remember who succeeded W.H.K. Campbell. Maybin was his assistant, but he went to Africa on transfer. I do not know whether Maybin or E.H. Lucette succeeded Campbell, but they were both Campbell's assistants and would follow his conservative development on sound lines.

10. Did you come across any such instances of villagers in the Vanni trying to sell their lands or buffaloes in order to meet trifling debts or irrigation fines as Jones-Bateman records?

Answer:

The villager's life was precarious depending on the weather and the crops, and indebtedness was common.

11. Were those people in the Vanni worse off economically than peasants in Badulla? in Kurunegala?

Answer:

Life was hard in the Vanni on account of the small rainfall. They were worse off than the peasants in Uva or N.W.P. because they did not have the large estates where they could obtain employment.

Mr. J.N. Bond's Answers to Questions forwarded by M.W. Roberts,
16 February 1966.

1. Have you any idea how the villagers looked on the Land Settlement Officers? Were they scared? Did they grumble? To what districts do your remarks apply?
2. Was the politicians' attack on British land policy and the L.S.O. in response to and reflecting peasant grievances or something arising from within their own breasts?

Answer:

I didn't serve in the Land Settlement Department. We always were glad when a village was "settled" and a Final Village Plan issued. Revenue officers then knew which land had been admitted private and which had been declared Crown. Latterly the land was 'mapped out' for various purposes - Forest Reserves, Village Expansion, etc. - and this facilitated administration. I have not come across any signs of fear on the part of the villagers. If their claim was sound they would receive a clear title.

I am not aware of any peasants' grievances. Politicians complaints were mostly that the Buddhist Temples had lost their land and they requested that the land be given back to the Temples.

3. There seems to have been considerable rivalry <u>within</u> the Irrigation Department in the 1920's and some obstructionism towards other Departments and the district officials. Did you hear about, or personally experience, such features? Did it continue into the 1930's as well?

Answer:

I have no knowledge of such rivalry or obstruction.

4. What did you think of Brayne's scheme of indivisible leaseholds? Did you feel that it was impracticable from the administrative point of view?

Answer:

For reasons given in the comments on Dr. Leach's book, I think Brayne's scheme was sound and in the villagers' interests.

5. Did you feel that the judicial system was too cumbersome and much too formalised and foreign to the mass of the peasantry? In land disputes was it possible for a judge to get at the heart of the matter without seeing the configuration of the land and without some inside knowledge of the village in question? Would you comment on the

view that the British brought law rather than justice?

Answer:

If there was anything the British brought, it was justice. The peasant could be sure of justice. I do not think the system was too cumbersome. In a land dispute, if the survey plan was insufficient, the judge inspected the land.

6. Have you any idea how Wodeman came to be chosen over Newnham as Deputy Chief Secretary?

Answer:

I have no idea.

7. How would you appraise the following (since deceased):

Answer:

Festing	He was my Government Agent in Uva. Efficient but not outstanding.
Maybin	A capable officer. Was Assistant to W.H.K. Campbell when he started the Cooperative Movement, and worked hard at it.
Archibald	No personal knowledge, but I believe he did good work in the Land Settlement Department.
Ingledow	I knew him as Police Magistrate, Chilaw. Rather pompous, but quite good.
Sudbury	He was Office Assistant when I was Cadet at Puttalum, my first station. He was a capable officer. After being wounded in the war, he had a plate in his head. This made him rather fussy and nervy.
Sir S. Phillipson	Did well in the Treasury.
T.A. Hodson	Was my Government Agent in Kandy, when I was Assistant Govt. Agent. Keen on his fishing, bridge and tennis and rather a self-seeker. Not outstanding.
R.M.M. Worsley	Was A.G.A. Puttalum when I was Office Assistant. A first-class officer of considerable ability.
H.G. Kaufman	An efficient officer with ideas.
E.F. Marshall	An unusual type who never rose very high. Was on the bench in Uva as D.J. and P.M. A kindly sort, who sometimes paid the accused's fine he had imposed.
Luddington	I knew him as Excise Commissioner. Intelligent and capable.

8. Have you any idea over what Sir Robert Drayton and D.S. Senanayake had a row in 1945 or 1946? It would seem that this big row completel marred a relationship which had been very successful till then.

Answer:

Sir Robert Drayton was a very able man, of whom I had a high opinion: I was Assistant Chief Secretary when he was Chief Secretary. He worked harmoniously with D.S. Senanayake, being Chairman of the Board of Ministers. The only conflict of which I am aware was that D.S. Senanayake as Minister of Agriculture and Lands wanted the appointment of certain Civil Servants: the Chief Secretary was in charge of the Public Service, and couldn't always agree to the appointments D.S. wanted. D.S. felt frustrated and unable to carry out the work of his Ministry as he wished.

Comments on Interview with Mr. R.N.Bond, C.M.G., O.B.E., 26.12.1965

Mr. Bond took little notice of the tape. His comments were unrestrained . This, I feel, was largely because he is a conscientious man and tried his best to help me. As the interview reveals, and as I gathered during my visit to his house, there is much that can be said regarding Mr. Bond which would apply to his actions during his Colonial Service.

A humble man, deliberate, conscientious and methodical I think he would have been pedantic in his earlier days as well. During the interview I found him slow on the uptake on occasions (though he was by no means aged or infirm) but would hesitate to state whether would have been so in his younger days. However, this does not mean that he was incompetent. He clearly had some ability. He must also have been a very industrious type. But he would have tended to work on stereotyped lines according to routine and direction from above. He would not have brnached off on his own - an aspect which some of his answers spotlight quite clearly.

Neither was he politically-minded. He does not seem to have thought very deeply about the Donoughmore Constitution. His interests were otherwise. Steeped in local matters no doubt. It is clear that he made efficiency and integrity his watchwords. One could say that he made a fetish of efficiency.

This sort of outlook must be taken into consideration in evaluating his answers. In several cases it would detract from the weight to be given to his views. It is noticeable, for instance, that he gives both Governors Stanley and Caldecott a higher billing than either Williams or Gimson. On the other hand, he did not consider all the top men uniformly brilliant - he distinguishes between Stubbs and Thomson and again between Drayton and Collins.

Though he was not able to give an opinion on some questions, on some of these occasions his very negative answer is a salient point in itself.

Lest listeners think that Mr. Bond was putting on a false front in claiming his inspiration from Christianity and proclaiming a doctrine of service, let me assure them that Mr. Bond is a truthful man and that he is indeed a practising Christian. I stayed a night with Mr. and Mrs. and assure the listeners on this point ; Mrs.Bond, incidentally, was born and bred in Ceylon being the daughter of an English missionary, Revd. Ward. As Mr. Bond will probably admit, he was not , I think, typical of the C.C.S. in being thus. Not that others were not similarly conscientious and dutiful but that they drew their inspiration from other factors.

Mr. Bond was not employing the arts of flattery in lauding the ability of the Ceylonese members of the C.C.S. This was his conviction. It is significant that he identified the Ceylonese and Europeans in the C.C.S. as one body and did not consider them separately. Several of my questions pertaining solely to the latter - though, I used ~~using~~ the term Civil Service-were not looked on in the same light by Mr. Bond and I had to make the distinction.

M.W.Roberts
28.11.65

Mr. G. Bromley's Answers to Questions forwarded by M.W. Roberts, 13 January 1966.

G.H. Bromley		b. 28 Sept. 1894.
	1914	appointed to Ceylon Police Force
	1915 Riots	stationed in Galle
	1924	promoted to S.P.
	1938-39	acted as D.I.G.P. for a while
	?	D.I.G.P.
	1944	retired as D.I.G.P.

1. With what feelings did you set out for Ceylon? Did you feel that you were going to "a land of the second-rate", to a "social desert"?

Answer

My brother was in India. From enquiries I learnt that Ceylon was a much nicer and far more "civilised" country so I was pleased to be going to Ceylon and not India (and I've never regretted it).

2. What are your impressions of the public service in Ceylon?

Answer

Judging by a scanty acquaintance with Govt. service at home I would say in general the Public Servants in Ceylon were far more conscientious and efficient.

3. In British political terms (parties) what was the prevailing shade of thought in the public service?

Answer

None - work first and politics were never considered.

4. Was their much cynicism in their conceptions of their duties and in their attitude to the local peoples?

Answer

No, certainly not.

5. Was the distinction between the Civil Service proper and the other services extended into social relations? Was there much snobbery and social ostracism?
6. If so, did it mar administrative liaison?
7. Were there any changes in these aspects during the period of your service?

Answer to 5,6,7

I found none. If any other than a Civil Servant thought so it was due to his "inferiority complex".

8. Would you say that British policy as a whole lacked purpose and drive?

9. Was there a tendency to preserve the status quo and concentrate on efficiency as an end in itself?

Answer to 8 and 9

This obviously depends on the different points of view just as does the British action at present in respect of Rhodesia. The Lagos communique just issued seems to have shown that "Hasten slowly", "Look before you leap" are not bad mottoes and roughly this was the policy in Ceylon.

10. Did the rise of an educated Ceylonese class critical of British rule make things more difficult for public servants?

Answer:

No - fair criticism is always helpful.

11. Were Indian events and the spread of terrorism in that quarter taken note of by public servants in Ceylon?

12. Was it feared that Indian sedition would spread to Ceylon?

Answer to 11 and 12:

No - Ceylon did not copy India.

13. Were the temperance meetings looked on as political meetings held under the cloak of temperance?

Answer:

No.

14. Where were you stationed when the riots broke out in 1915? Was there any trouble in your neighbourhood?

15. Were you called upon to help maintain law and order?

Answer to 14 and 15:

In Galle. Yes.

16. Do you think the riots were pre-meditated? Were they organised in any way, even if badly?

Answer:

No.

17. Who were the instigators?

Answer:

After the initial trouble in Kandy rumour mongers and mischief makers formented the riots in other places.

18. Do you think it had strong anti-British tendencies?

19. Is it correct to say that the European community came to feel that it was a threat to them?

20. For what specific reasons did they feel so?

Answer to 18, 19 and 20:
No.

21. Do you think initial firmness on the part of the police (a) in Kandy (b) in Colombo might have prevented further trouble?

22. Did the authorities in Kandy show great weakness? Was the G.A. known to be a weak man?

Answer to 21 and 22:
It is generally admitted the trouble in Gampola was dealt with efficiently. It is impossible to stop lying rumours from being circulated except in a "Police State".

23. Would you say that the Colombo Police did not have the training, the backbone or the resources to handle this sort of thing?

Answer:
Probably, yes. Nothing similar had happened within living memory and the general direction of the Police was that it was a civil force and its being armed was a rule of the Malay Rifles from which it emerged.

24. Do you think martial law was necessary?

25. Do you think it was necessary to prolong martial law for three months?

Answer to 24 and 25:
In my opinion - no.

26. Did Brigadier-General Malcolm's advice have much to do with it?

Answer:
I don't know what it was.

27. What sort of role did Sir Herbert Dowbiggin play? Was it he who advised the arrest of Senanayake and Co.?

Answer:
Martial law put the matter in military hands. The normal

civilian police activites were no longer solely in the hands of the Inspector General.

28. What influence did Bowes have on Govt. action?

29. Would you say that Sir A. Bertram was a weak man?

Answer to 28 and 29:
No comment - I do not know details.

30. Were you involved in any shooting escapades or did you participate in any court-martials?

31. Were the drum-head court martials fairly conducted?

Answer:
Mr. L.J.B. Turner the Riot Commissioner was such a fair minded man that it is impossible to think any trial before him was unfair.

32. Was it known that the Moors brought cases against many of their enemies even if they had no foundation?

Answer:
In such circumstances false cases against your enemies are common

33. Would you comment on the popular view that Government panicked and went to extremes?

34. What do you think of Sir John Anderson's verdict on Government's measures?

Answer to 33 and 34:
Everyone was caught unawares and it was unfortunate (it is generally admitted) that the Governor had no previous experience as a Colonial Govt. Servant or Colonial Governor nor had he had Sir John Anderson's experience as a Home Secretary.

35. Did his illness affect his judgement?

36. Would you call his despatch "appalling"? Do you think he was fooled by cases which were specially engineered and fashioned by the lawyers?

37. Was he unpopular among Civil Servants? If so was it for his views on the subject or because of other factors?

38. Is there any foundation in the local gossip that G.F.M. Ennis did not get a Knighthood because he was critical of Government's actions in 1915?

Answer to 35-38:

No comment - it is impossible to do so without records or access to them.

39. Since the riots in Colombo were led by discontented workers - especially the Railway workers - would it not be correct to say that Government's failure to grant any significant concessions to the demands they had presented in 1912-13 contributed to the uprising?

Answer:

I did not realise that the riots in Colombo were led by "discontented railway workers". After all the railway workers were of all nationalities, these were Sinhalese Muslim riots.

40. Did Anderson succeed in conciliating the embittered Ceylonese peoples?

Answer:

It was recognised that Sir John Anderson was a man of wide experience and had not been involved in the troubles.

41. What was your reaction to the Donoughmore Constitution?

42. What was the reaction of other Public Servants you were friendly with?

Answer:

It was accepted and welcomed as a necessary step to the settlement of self government.

43. What were (and are) your views on the grant of universal franchise?

44. Would you comment on its working in the practice?

Answer to 43 and 44:

A bold and imaginative step towards democratic government. It set the pattern for all dependencies and of course it takes a long time for it to function properly.

45. Have you any ideas what factors contributed to the friction between the 3 Officers-of-State and the Ministers, particularly

in the early 1930's?

Answer:

Possibly the ministers thought they should have a free hand in respect of the Government servants.

46. Did you resent the action of the State Council in refusing to grant passage allowances, etc. to European Public Servants?

Answer:

I don't think this was more than a gesture.

47. Were you subject to personal political attacks or political interference at any time? Did you resent these, if any?

48. Was there an increase in political interference in administrative matters in the 1920's? ... any further increase in the 1930's?

49. How did the Public Service react to these criticisms and to the interference? Was it resented? Were they "demoralised" as a result?

Answer to 47-49:

I would not say any criticism of Government Servants were from purely Political motives. They were made because it was generally felt there was something wrong, a new view should be taken and always as far as I was concerned in a constructive manner.

50. Can you recall the Suriya Mal Movement? Was this taken seriously by Europeans?

Answer:

No - I assume had it been serious I would have remembered.

51. Why was Bracegirdle deported? Was he creating serious disruption among estate labour?

52. Do you think Government mishandled the situation?

Answer to 51 and 52:

He was doing no good to himself or anyone else and had no settled occupation in the Island. A slip was made in the Deportation order - that was all.

53. Was serious notice taken of the L.S.S.P. and the Communists in the late 1930's? Was an eye kept on them by the Police?

Answer:

It was known that from the formation of the Third International early 1920's that it was sending its revolutionary literature to certain people in Ceylon.

54. What sort of man was D.B. Jayatilaka? Was he a good Minister?

55. Would you appraise any other Ceylonese politicians you came into contact with?

Answer to 54 and 55:

They were highly respected and competent.

56. Why were trade union activities considered seditious (in the 1920's)?

Answer:

See 53 but there were no seditious activities.

57. (a) What sort of man was A.E. Goonesinha in the 1920's? ...later?
 (b) Were you involved in policing any strikes? Could you describe them - the alleged causes for each - personalities involved and outcome?
 (c) Did Goonesinha ever employ the racial issue?

Answer:

(a) A flamboyant labour leader who did start the first organised labour party.

(b) The tramway strike in 1930.① A.E. Goonesinha can be said to have led the strike. The calling in of voluntary drivers by the Company duly led to their being afforded Police protection and this/inevitably was followed by hostility to the Police. The strikers with sympathisers finally attacked Police Headquarters with stones and firebrands but no real damage was done and on the arrival of a small detachment of Royal Artillery the crowd dispersed. Belatedly the Chief Secretary took action and the dispute settled without any more trouble.

(c) No - nor could he be said to have been aware of or condoned the trouble in the Tramway Strike.

58. Were there any fears that Indian types of sedition and the Gandhi-inspired movements would spread to Ceylon or arise in some form in Ceylon?

Answer:

See 11 and 12.

① Actually 1929.

59. Did you find that one weakness among Ceylonese (Policemen, Civil Servants, Government Servants and politicians) was an unwillingness to accept responsibility?

Answer:

No. I think most of such criticism arises because of inexperience and the desire to do the right thing needs careful consideration.

60. Would you appraise the Ceylon Police Force. Any shortcomings?

61. Would you present a picture of Sir Herbert Dowbiggin the man and Dowbiggin the Inspector-General of Police?

Answer to 60 and 61:

Sir Herbert Dowbiggin made the Police Force efficient. My only criticism is that he could not forget the Sinhalese Muslim Riots of 1915.

62. Of what calibre were Sir H. Stanley, Sir G. Thomson, Sir R.E.Stubbs, and Sir A. Caldecott as Governors and Sir M. Fletcher, Sir M.M. Wedderburn, Sir F.G. Tyrrell, Sir H. Bourdillon as Colonial Secretaries?

63. Did Tyrrell, Bourdillon and Wedderburn have imagination and any other characteristics needed to work under the Donoughmore Constitution?

Answer:

No comments.

Unrecorded Information provided by Mr. A.E. Christoffelsz during conversation, 28 September 1966.

He had told Edmund Rodrigo that his trouble was that he wrote first and thought afterwards. 'That's why he did not get on with Senanayake?', I inquired. 'With everyone', said Mr. Christoffelsz. Continuing he said that Rodrigo was a contrast to C.L. Wickremasinghe; C.L. thought first and then put pen to paper; Rodrigo had a far better brain but was 'impulsive'; he had his letters posted before he had thought things out. His letters were prone to be 'sarcastic'. 'Was he an essay writer?', I inquired. He seemed inclined to agree but added that he was one of the best Directors of Agriculture we have had.

Codrington was a student. He was 'high and haughty' and reserved; did a very good job of work but kept aloof. This aloofness was applied to Europeans as well. Christoffelsz thought highly of him.

Newnham was a Don Juan and a gad-about. Married twice officially, 'many times unofficially'; quite a noted subject of gossip among his Municipal workers. Did a very good job as Commissioner for the Relief of Distress during the malaria epidemic.

Stace was not very keen on his job, his heart being in philosophical subjects. But he had a good brain, was able, listened to reason and grasped points quickly. Stace disliked the Ratnapura planters: called them 'Aberdonian guttersnipes'. Stace moved in intellectual circles, with Professor Marrs and with Read, Principal of Royal; he was a member of the Twenty Club.

Pentelow was a very good linguist and mixed freely with Ceylonese. Pentelow had told him once that this was frowned upon; he had been transferred to NuwaraEliya as a result. He had taken to drink and become slipshod in his work. Was sacked as a result.

Bond was a staunch Methodist and a lay preacher; 'thorough'; 'long-winded'.

Stevens was a nice man; 'unassuming'.

T.W. Roberts (my father) was fearless and strong. You knew where you stood with him. I raised the point about the West Indians, Rock and my father, being neither here(with the Europeans)nor there(with the Ceylonese). He said that T.W. had a better brain than Rock. When S.W.R.D. Bandaranayake had approached Christoffelsz to be Chairman of the Bribery Commission (c. 1959) Christoffelsz had been recovering from illness and had suggested that Banda wouldn't get a more independent person than my father. Banda had had a long chat with T.W. in the Orient Club and T.W. had come in as a Commissioner though not as Chairman.

Furse Roberts was known for his 'draconian' and stern sentences as a judge. He was a chap who had worked his way up from the ranks(in Britain) into the Civil Service and was not favoured in the best British circles in Ceylon. I inquired if he was notorious for giving biased decisions in favour of Europeans but he did not comment. He said that he was stern; and added that he was 'crude'. Paul Pieris had come across a Jaffna man with an European surname and written something to the effect of this fellow with 'a foreign name' and Wood Renton had it expurged from the records. Wood Renton was known to be stern and severe.

Christoffelsz had got into the local division of the Civil Service and then asked for permission to go to Cambridge (1912-15), but had lost seniority as a result; with no regrets. He had liked it at Cambridge. I inquired whether the colour-bar operated there. 'Oh, yes', he said. It had been quite pronounced in those days. Ceylonese and Indians were prohibited from membership of certain societies, though, strangely, Japanese and Chinese were less discriminated against. The Union Society did not have such a bar. If you took part in sports, you were more acceptable and Christoffelsz had participated in athletics, cricket and tennis. However when he had turned up for Queen's College soccer practice he had been asked to keep goal, though a forward. He had refused and not played thereafter.

The British believed in their superiority and Christoffelsz was convinced that it exists among Britons in Ceylon even today. In his time there was much aloofness. Furse Roberts had kicked a Ceylonese out of his first-class compartment. Forrest(?) had refused to share a two-berth sleeping compartment with a Supreme Court Judge named Thomas De Sampayo. On one occasion, an Assistant Settlement Officer named P.J. Hudson had remarked to Christoffelsz and some others, referring to some Ceylonese, 'I consider myself superior to any Ceylonese'. I inquired whether the post First World War set were not more liberal and sympathetic. 'Some were(, he said; but added that the whole lot were caught up in this groove and had to conform to the standards of the European circle. Thus fellow-administrators from the same station as Christoffelsz would not deign to see him when he was in Nuwara Eliya. Nuwara Eliya had to be a British preserve. The Irrigation Department was a notorious centre of prejudice. There is a written minute where it was stated that they would prefer a man from the streets of London to a Ceylonese engineer. As a matter of fact many of the European irrigation men were third-rate trash. There was a chap said to have been down and out and reduced to searching dustbins who had got in to the Department. Webb had been sacked from India and called on a Birmingham friend of his in Ceylon and asked for a job and promptly got one. There was only one really classy chap in the Department and that was Kennedy. He had a 'brilliant' brain. Unfortunately he was an alcoholic. Christoffelsz had known him in Kurunegala. He used to drink a lot then but get up at 4 or 5a.m. and work; in fact, he worked better when drunk, in Christoffelsz's opinion. I inquired about Wilson and Taylor and Kitching. Wilson he could not recall. 'Taylor was mediocre'. 'Kitching was good but was not here for long'.

Luddington was a first-rate mathematician and a very able officer but had been kept in the backwoods because he was not from the top-drawer and was not an Oxbridge product, being a Durham University graduate.

Huxham had worked his way up and was first-class in his field.

R.M. Davies was a half-blue in athletics from Cambridge and 'a lazy swine'.

M.W. Roberts
28/9/66

Comments on Interview with Sir Charles Collins, C.M.G. 25 January 1966.

In his 70's Sir Charles is obviously ageing but has his wits about him and is at present in the process of writing a chapter for an American book on "Newly Emergent Nations". In his letter to me he had expressed some doubts about the use of a tape-recorder and said he would prefer not to have one, but I had replied putting my case for the use of one and we had agreed to the compromise of shutting it off whenever he wished. Nevertheless he did not request this once. But this would indicate that he was moderately guarded.

I had, often without seeking to, gathered a lot about Sir Charles before the interview, the consensus of opinion, without any exception, being that he was pedestrian and only of moderate ability though a prodiguous worker. On the whole I would say the interview supported this view (and my expectations). I found him friendly and more candid than I expected and very mild-mannered but he also gave one the impression that he lacked depth. Lady Collins was a dear old thing but, perhaps, because of a natural reserve, he somehow gave the impression that he lacked that extra little bit of warmth which would make one take to a man. I repeat, this could have been due to a natural reserve. I should add that he was quite ready to chuckle and was not quite pedantic. His long experience in Ceylon and, above all, his experience in Secretariat posts and in the Legislative and State Councils - not to mention his hand in the constitutional problems from 1945 to 1948 - meant that he had perforce acquired considerable knowledge of many problems which did not normally interest non-politically minded Civil Servants. The facility with which he aired views on such points, therefore, need not be held to indicate either wide interests or any great perception. But he was not ready to agree with the view that British rule lacked drive and imagination. Indeed his answer here would support the view that British rule lacked ultimate political ends. His assessment of Stubbs and many other individuals would also suggest that he himself was an average man, though he was not wholly indiscriminatory in his appraisal of men.

Given the guardedness which I expected and his long stints in the Secretariat I could hardly raise queries as to the essay-writing tendencies and obstructionism in the Secretariat. Those relating to the sticky issues of arrogance and aloofness as well as Ceylonisation I raised over tea [see note on unrecorded information]. He was, on the face of it, only a trifle guarded on the 1915 riots but again, it was surprising that he saw nothing wrong with Brigadier-General Malcolm. His answers on the riots, however, were useful, one way or another.

I did not press for his opinions on personnel to any marked extent. A very useful interview, providing tit-bits of valuable information on many topics: 1915 riots, Secretariat attitude to Goonesinha , the 1924

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Constitution, the reaction of Heads of Department to political criticism, Land Settlement work, the Board of Ministers under the Donoughmore Constitution, on Tyrrell and Woods, the years before Independence, among others.

I should add that I think Sir Charles got on with the politicians as, indeed, he claims he did. Though, perhaps, somewhat pedantic and likely to stick to rules, his attitude towards them (during the interview) was quite genial and one would presume that this was so in the 1920's - 1940's as well.

M.W. Roberts
25.1.66

Confidential and Unrecorded Information provided by Sir Charles Collins, C.M.G., 25 January, 1966.

I made the point that Ceylonese Civil Servants felt that they were shunted into the judicial line and excluded from A.G.A'ships and G.A'ships, and he said that this was so at the start but that they could not complain on this score later on. I inquired whether it was a matter of policy at the start (i.e. 1900's and 1920's - 1920's by implication). He said that it was "not a policy but just that they doubted" whether these Ceylonese would "be suited" to these posts. "In other words their discretion was not trusted", I said. He said "Yes" rather hesitantly but went on to say that he considered their feeling and their doubts on this point "very wrong" and were "not justified" by later events - i.e. the performance of Ceylonese Civil Servants in these posts in the 1930's and the 1920's.

I inquired whether one of the reasons for this hesitation was the fact that the people themselves distrusted the impartiality of Ceylonese officers, and both Sir C. Collins and Lady Collins emphatically agreed that "this was so". I replied that in theory this would have seemed valid but when one looked at the Ceylonese personnel concerned its validity was doubtful. Sir Charles reiterated his opinion that the British Government was slow on this point and that it would have been better to associate Ceylonese in this field at an earlier date.

I raised W.T. Stace's criticism to the effect that the British community was guilty of arrogance and racial prejudice; Sir Charles voiced a rather hesitant "Yes - there was some of it ... Its so up to a point" while Lady Collins opined a far firmer "Yes, there was some".

I said that it would seem that the leading Civil Servants were also rather too aloof from the people and the educated Ceylonese. Lady Collins said that her husband was on good terms with and in touch with the politicians but, quite firmly added, that my criticism was true of "some" of them. Sir Charles acquiesced rather reluctantly. I stated that this aloofness was bad in that it meant a lack of understanding or knowledge with the trend of local political thought. Again Sir Charles nodded but pointed out that some officials were "in touch" with the politicians.

I inquired whether it had been unwise for the Donoughmore Commission to put the heads of Departments in direct contact with Ministers instead of having the present system of a Permanent Secretary who, in effect, acts as a buffer. He replied that the junior Civil Servants who were Secretaries to the Executive Committees did fill this role to some extent.

I asked him whether it had not been an unwise move on the part of the Donoughmore Commission to allow Executive Committees to have a say on P.S.C. appointments. He said that it had been felt that this was necessary but said that "perhaps" it was unwise.

On my inquiries, he said that he had had considerable doubts at the outset whether he liked colonial life - i.e. life in the C.C.S. "like Woolf" he added. I said, "Oh, did you have the same feelings against imperialism". His reaction was, "Oh, Woolf had a bee in his bonnet about that" and said that it was not that, but that he had not settled down and had had doubts about the type of life there. "The fierce young parties?" I queried. "Um-m", he said; but he added that he had soon got over these doubts - "one found a niche for oneself". [Being a religous sort and not the type who liked to prop up a bar, I am certain it is to this aspect of social life and the demand for this sort of drinking cum-outdoor behaviour which he had disliked.]

He did not think S.W.R.D. had "a touch of megalomania" though this may have been so later (in the late 50's). His father of course had been a great old gent; "a proper Tory", he added, implying how different the son was.

M.W. Roberts
25.1.66

Confidential and Unrecorded Information provided by Mr. R.Y. Daniel during interview, 1 September 1966.

Huxham had sent for him and asked him to start a War Savings Movement. He had said that the Service personnel and the Forces were spending a big sum of money in Ceylon and there was a danger of pronounced inflation. As a means of diminishing inflation they were going to start people on Savings.

Daniel felt that in the 1950's D.S. had kept him too long in charge of Savings. After his operation for cancer in the [throat? jaw?] in [1950 or 1951], he was not able to speak for long and could not indulge in propaganda as before; he had wanted to resign or take on something else but Government had wanted him to continue.

Jennings was 'a genius'; an avid reader with a photographic memory; only needed four or five hours sleep; very quick to grasp matters; a good administrator and practical. Sir Nicholas Attygalle compared very ill: did not have any learning; 'pig-headed'; would not listen to anyone else; 'a stud-bull'. N.B. That Jennings and then Attygalle served as Chairman of the National Savings Movement Committees and that Mr. Daniel would have served with them in this connection. Dudley was rather lazy; D.S. was on the decline intellectually during his period of Premiership. Mr. Daniel had a great respect for D.S. [vide interview]. He obviously could not stick Banda. I inquired whether Banda had a touch of megalomania and he was most positive that he had. If I recall correctly he said Banda was 'mad'. I inquired how Banda was as an administrator. He said, 'Utterly useless'. Carl Arndt had left the Service because he found that he could not discuss anything with Banda; Banda used to rave and storm.

He informed me that with regard to my questions on land speculators and the names I had raised, Batuwantudawe and the Coreas were noted as such though he had not said so while the tape-recorder was on.

M.W. Roberts
1/9/66

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Comments on Interview with G.L.D. Davidson, 9 December 1965.

Absolutely candid. He started off by explaining his bias which was distinctly anti-imperialist and critical of Government. One should add that he is a Labour supporter (in 1965 and the post 2nd World War at least) and, I should think, a strong one.

There were several points at which he asked me to shut off the recorder. These occasions were when he had some severe personal remarks to make on some individuals. But as it was he provided many frank views on individuals while the tape was on. I pushed my luck to the limit here. Though he said he was not a good judge of men and himself admitted having a sharp tongue, I would be inclined to give his opinion fair weight. He was biased against some individuals but he knew when and stated it. He was always trying to be fair.

This was because he was introspective and inward-looking. Though his criticisms were pretty severe (re men, policy and practice) they were rarely sweeping - always qualified. A very perceptive man with a questioning mind, he was not content to work in grooves. Quite strong against unnecessary red-tape, orthodoxy and pettiness. He was more a provincial officer and thought poorly of those in the inner-circle and the men who were in the Secretariat. I incline to think he was a practical man; certainly his war experience among the Sappers would have conduced towards practicality.

What was particularly pleasing was his objectivity. This was especially useful on colour-bar questions where he stripped the normal pooh-poohing and wishy-washy 'framework' of all its gloss and its rationalistic facade. He had also thought about the deeper and more basic questions for these drew a spate of words (and points) in a way which indicated that they were not new to him - and not mere irrelevant amorphous words. It is significant that many of his criticisms are of the same strain as those made by Newnham, Gimson, Strong and Stace and other more objective, questioning individuals. What I found particularly impressive was the fact that he had read Philip Mason's "Rulers of India" (2 vols.) and his book on Rhodesia. Somehow I doubt if many C.C.S. men have done so. He had also read Cameron's Judicial Report.

He was sometimes like a river in flood. His memory was obviously pretty vivid and this is a fact of great importance. (He was born in 1898, and served from 1921-1952.) What was also of great value were the many little examples he expounded on at great length. These stories were extremely interesting though, perhaps, at times having much ballast from the historical point of view. Such was his flow that the whole interview took around four hours, with a break for lunch.

A very meaty and juicy and valuable interview - and not merely because he provides fodder for historical criticism but because they come from a perceptive, questioning and introspective mind with very vivid memories of Ceylon. What is more he was not as flamboyant or as sweeping as Newnham tended to be at times. His criticism of the L.S.D. is of special importance: the first I have come across.

M.W. Roberts
9.12.65

P.S. His letter of 19 December 1965 (see MSS) reveals more of the man. His highly radical ideas are indicated by the fact that he enclosed Trevor Huddleston's article "To my kith and kin" in obvious approval of many points made there. Note that Leach, who disliked Davidson and admitted it, considered him too perfectionist and "efficiency mad".

Extract from Letter: Davidson - M.W. Roberts, 19 December 1965.

In talking about the past, there are two difficulties to contend with. First, of course, my memory is not as good as it was, and not only have I forgotten many things, but I realise that my memory may be inaccurate on other matters. Secondly, I see many things in a different light now from the light I saw them in when they occurred; but it is often very hard, when recalling them, to realise that my attitude has changed in the meantime.

Comments on Interview with Mr. Shelton Fernando, 15 May 1966.

As I am a personal friend of his son the interview was always on a cordial footing. I found Mr. Fernando fresh of memory, very candid, responsive and eager to help. He was, I think, wondering what exactly I wanted but once I got on to the headmen and the elections of the 30's you could see him warming to his subject. He was, thereafter, wholly absorbed in the discussion. He was intensely interested in each query and his candidness of answer flowed in part from this interest. At the same time his was the attitude of an academic - he read History at Oxford - to a retrospective survey of events and administrative problems in which he was a participant. Indeed, consciously so. It is noticeable that on several occasions, in recollecting some point, he added "This is interesting" or "This is useful". On several issues, then, he was striving to give a proper historical assessment.

I do not think he was trying to push himself or the work he did; but he was ever ready to stress the role of the C.C.S. and to show that it was an elitist body chosen through competitive exams. Thus prone to cast himself and the C.C.S. as intellectuals who, on the whole, did act and serve as a professional elite. He was very much in favour of the elitist principle. In thus emphasising the role of the C.C.S. he was not so much blowing the trumpet of his team as asking honour where honour was due.

I do not think he is communal minded; indeed, very fair on this sphere and no apologist for the Sinhalese. Nor is he right wing to the extent of being pro-U.N.P. though, obviously, he did not care for the Communists.

I cannot say how one should rate his appraisal of men. He was not guarded in this sphere but as far as judgments went I don't think he was the hypercritical sort or very demanding - i.e he was likely to be benign and give individuals the benefit of any doubt.

Since he joined the C.C.S. only in 1931 my range of questions was limited but I think his information was very, very useful in certain spheres: the headmen system and its influence in the 31/36 elections; the Cooperative Movement; the application of Brayne's protected tenures under the Land Development Ordinance of 1935; on S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike; on Banda and the 1958 riots.

M.W. Roberts
15.5.66

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Comments on Second Interview, 19 March 1967.

This interview followed my attempts to get Sir Richard to write out his comment on certain extracts from the book 'Pul Eliya'. He preferred to have another recorded session. A good forty minutes, therefore, was expended on this subject. The rest of the interview pertained largely to points I had not raised at our first meeting (I reviewed the first interview beforehand) but also touched on some aspects raised earlier. The latter was partly for purposes of clarification, partly in order to check on consistency. His information on his politician brother (Bernard Aluwihare), on Alex Fraser, on the headmen system, on land-grabbing by speculators and on land settlement work were the more useful sides of this interview.

M.W. Roberts
20/3/67.

Unrecorded Information provided by Mr. C.H.Z. Fernando during conversation, 31 July 1966.

In 1910, as a youngster C.H.Z. spoke at a meeting of the Ceylon Students Union in London - a meeting attended by the Secretary of State - and speaking critically of the constitutional reforms said that he did not want 'the crumbs from the white man's table'. This speech had been severely criticised in Ceylon, especially by the Independent run by Hector Van Cuylenburg. The critics had suggested that C.H.Z. be refused permission to re-enter Ceylon. The only people who supported him were F.R. Senanayake and A.E. Goonesinha - the latter a clerk in the Railway at that time - who wrote letters congratulating him on his speech.

In 1915 the Senanayake brothers had spoken at a meeting of a temperance society in Mihirigama - a meeting which was held in the premises of the Railway it would seem; but at any rate A.E. Goonesinha, an employee in the Railway Department, was stationed there. Mr. Fernando spoke as if the meeting was 'during the 1915 riots'. But from his answers (imprecise) to further queries and from what I know of the period this must have been before May 1915. The C.I.D. had approached Goonesinha and wanted him to sign a statement saying that the Senanayakes had incited the Sinhalese to rise against the Moors. Goonesinha refused. Again, Mr. Fernando was vague re the exact date of this request i.e. whether it was before or during the riots. I should say it was before because Mr. Fernando added that Goonesinha had to leave the Railway Department as a result.

Mr. Fernando mentioned how a small group had formed a body called the Servants of Lanka, pledged to work against the British. I inquired whether this was the same as the Young Lanka League but he made it clear that this group was only a section of the Young Lanka League, which was only 'a political body'. The Servants of Lanka, it would seem, were thinking of 'throwing bombs' etcetera. They signed a pact in blood. The group included Goonesinha, C.H.Z. Fernando, E.A.P. Wijeyratne, Jinendradasa, Roland Perera and A.W.P. Jayatilaka. It was later suspected that Roland Perera gave information to the Police. The group were arrested just after the 1915 riots, but C.H.Z. and ? , being Christians, were released at once.

C.E. Corea and E.T. de Silva had entered into a pact with W. Duraiswamy agreeing to a fifty fifty representation in Council. In other words, they had accepted that ten Tamils were equal to one Sinhalese. Though Corea was President of the National Congress, the Senanayakas had put young C.H.Z. Fernando to contest the Puttalam seat in the 1923 elections because of this. Corea asked E.T. de Silva to contest the seat. C.H.Z. had trounced this combine.

M.W. Roberts
31/9/66

Unrecorded Information provided by Mr. Shelton Fernando, 15 May 1966.

He considered S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike's historical role as "enigmatic". By this he meant: that while in 1956 Banda brought radical forces to the forefront and inaugurated the age of the common man, the administration went to the dogs and was undermined by the "apey arnduwa" mentality. In effect that he brought something bad as well. Here Mr. Fernando was obviously trying to give what he considered a corrective and balanced viewpoint in the face of the present-day tendency to eulogise S.W.R.D.

The C.C.S. has been done away and the elitist concept drowned. Mr. Fernando was against this. He felt that there was much uncalled for criticism of the C.C.S. men as Brahmins and so forth. The common view of C.C:S. men was that this was motivated by jealousy - that most of the sub-editors of the Ceylonese newspapers were chaps who had sat for the C.C.S. exam and not succeeded.

He related a story about the 1959 Oxford Society dinner which throws a light on Banda the man - the petty-minded man perhaps? But this is my inference. Mr. Fernando was not suggesting this. Indeed he told the story when my wife and Mrs. Fernando were present. The dinner took place in Mr. Fernando's house just after a minor contretemps between two prominent old Oxonians. One, Canon De Saram, had made a speech at St. Thomas' College in which he criticised glib politicians who were mere men of words, pulled the wool over people's eyes, etc., etc. Another, the Prime Minister (Banda), had rushed to the conclusion that this was a barb aimed directly at him (though it fitted numerous others) and written a letter of protest to Canon De Saram, who retorted on the lines that "if the cap fitted ...." But at the dinner Banda had made it a point to greet the Canon warmly and conversed at length with him. Come the after dinner speeches however, Bishop Lakdasa De Mel, with his characteristic ability of putting his foot in it, made a speech where (among other things) he lauded Canon De Saram as the first Ceylonese to win a Blue, adding that being a Boxing Blue he was quite used to taking blows below the belt. At this Banda had taken offence and pretty soon afterwards had called Mrs. B., remarked that they were not there to be insulted and walked off in a huff. The Oxford Society Dinner had promptly fizzled out.

Philip Gunewardena and Mrs. Vimala Wijewardena were "notorious" as Ministers who gave Permanent Secretaries a dog's life by constant interference. They sought to run their departments themselves from the peon to the Permanent Secretary. In response to my query he said that Mrs. Vimala was able.

M. W. Roberts
15.5.66.

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Mr. Shelton Fernando's Answers to Questions forwarded by M.W. Roberts, 3 July 1966

1. What originated the contretemps between D.S. and Edmund Rodrigo?

Answer:

From personal experience I can say it was the severely independent spirit of Rodrigo. Whereas 9/10ths even of senior officials were only too prone to curry favour with the great man, for future advancement, Rodrigo would have none of it. He even kept a file called 'Interference File' and Interferer No. 1 was D.S. the Minister himself!

This was mainly for interference from politicians in Public Service affairs and appointments for which they really had no right or status even under the then Constitution.

2. Did D.S. incline to desire "yes-men" as heads of departments? Didn't he undermine the efficiency of the Irrigation Dept. very seriously by driving several experienced officers away?

Answer:

Not exactly. But he seldom took argument or bona fide advice in good part if they impinged on any fixed views of his.

Yes, especially Europeans at the top were his pet aversions. He had a kink I fear that few Europeans (with the notable exception of people like C.V. Brayne) really had the interests of the country at heart. I could certainly say this of the Agric. Dept. top officers.

Few Irrigation or Survey Dept. men at the top survived his regime. He could be rude even to Govt. Agents whom he found to be too slow in the execution of his land policies.

3. It is commonly said that when it came to a case between Europeans and local persons British judges and administrators invariably, and even unconsciously, favoured their own kind. Any comments?

Answer:

Judges. I think British justice was undiscriminating except during the days of the 1915 Riots when the Governor and the Military lost their nerve and also heads.

Administrators. Yes, to a great extent with notable exceptions like Freeman, Leonard Woolf and C.V. Brayne.

I have personally seen at the Badulla Kachcheri papers about Brayne being 'reported' to the Chief Secretary for working direct with A.G.A's in provincial kachcheris where he found the G.A. almost obstructive over land work.

4. What sort of man was Millington?

Answer:

Millington was a rather difficult man to get on with, but a gentleman. The unfortunate thing about him, by the time he got on to Uva, was that he wouldn't trust anybody. It appears some unscrupulous Mudaliyar at Hambantota when he was A.G.A. let him down over a big salt stock and as A.G.A. he had to suffer a big surcharge of several thousands of Ruppees.

Therefore as G.A. we all found him painstakingly meticulous to the slightest detail, and not taking anything or anybody for granted.

Also as a result, over-conscientious, which ultimately provoked his sad suicide, with neck on the Railway. I cannot vouch for the immediate cause tho' I was his A.G.A. then but the story I heard must be largely true.

In lower Uva a well-known Southern trader was detected felling large quantities of timber on allegedly Crown land. As the village was 'unsettled' the trader offered to deposit the full value of the timber and asked for authority to remove. Again with his habitual caution Millington refused, but by the time 'settlement' came all the timber had deteriorated, and the trader sued Government for 50,000. Valuations were in a confidential safe and somebody in the kachcheri had, before the Court Case, leaked the contents to the trader.

Taken aback and by surprise when plaintiff's counsel confronted him with knowledge that he himself could remember only hazily, Millington shaped rather badly in the witness box under cross-examination.

As he got off some stupid crown counsel remarked that he had let the Crown down. This stung the poor man so much that within an hour of tea at Temple Trees and 2 hours before a Queen's House Dinner his neck was on the railway line.

Tragic to relate, the Crown was not let down after all and won, and the appeal before L.M.D. de Silva failed too.

5. ... and Bassett? I would also like a short account of the aims of the Rural Marketing Department, the obstacles faced and the extent of its success? Was liaison with the Co-op Movement called for?

Answer:

Bassett Fine man, tho' War Service C.C.S. with hardly a Matric Certificate. Excellent as Colombo Police Magistrate, who trained me as Cadet. Later my immediate boss in the Marketing Department.

He can also be called the inspirer of the Marketing Dept.

initiated in 1935 I think. He gave the idea to D.S. when as A.G.A. N'Eliya he found that a papaw for which he paid in town some 50 cents did not fetch 5 cents to the producer. (He told me himself about this as a typical case.)

Sad to say after 31 years the Dept. is not fulfilling its functions as conceived. Often it is one more middle-man buying from traders who buy from a multiplicity of small producers.

You are perfectly right that from the beginning suppliers should have been small men producers banding themselves into cooperative units.

6. What sort of man was Brayne?

Answer:

A great lover of Ceylon, if ever there was one among foreigners. Peasant proprietor policies were mooted by him long before D.S. became a minister. The real father of the L.D.O. tho' by the time it came under action it was time for him to retire.

Everybody (non-imperialist) felt that a knighthood was surely his due (got only a C.M.G.) but understandably those who genuinely loved the people, like Woolf and Brayne, were not popular with the British Raj.

(Note earlier story of many G.A.A's reporting him for going too fast with A.G.A.A. on land policy!)

His brother F.L. Brayne I.C.S. was a great man for the peasantry too and his famous Gurgaon experiment of peasant settlement in the Punjab is said to have inspired younger C.V.

7. How would you appraise the C.C.S. men with whom you worked in the Secretariat, 1931-32? and the G.A's under whom you served in Matale and Puttalum?

Answer:

Sir Graeme Tyrrell, Chief Secy. was exceedingly kind to me and he even attended my wedding 30 miles away near Negombo. So were his Assistants G.C. Miles and C.H. Hartwell (now Sir Charles). R.H.D. Manders later 2nd Asst. Secy. and my boss while cadet with 5 years' seniority had the pleasure of serving under me 25 years later as a G.A. in several places!

I think I was one of just 2 or 3 Ceylonese ever to be appointed cadet at the C.S.O.

W.O. Stevens and A.E. Christoffelsz were both very efficient and hardworking. Genuinely interested in their field work.

8. Was the grant of universal franchise in 1931 generally viewed with misgiving, if not opposition, by most Civil Servants?

Answer:

I actually joined a few months after the 1st General Election of June or July 1931 under the Donoughmore Constitution. Those already in service when the Commissioners arrived in Ceylon in 1927 can answer best.

9. Were there a class of Ceylonese who speculated in land (in the 1920's and 1930's) and tended to buy up peasant land held on dubious title (e.g. that of <u>diga</u>-married women)? There is some suspicion that a few politicians critical of British land policy in the 20's were themselves land sharks. Have you any information on this point?

Answer:

Notaware, tho' some were suspect I hear. Yes, I have heard the same of politicians, some of whom even shrunk many a village by buying up small holdings in order to enlarge their estates.

10. Did the British bring law rather than justice? Was it possible for a judge, seated in a distant town, to solve some of the land cases without knowing the configuration of the land and a knowledge of the ramified family and personal relationships in the village concerned?

Answer:

I still think British justice is proverbial. They were not merely legalistic and the Rule of Law was clearly shown to shine even against British Governors. (Heard of the famous Bracegirdle case of 1938?)

Curiously many European judges were quite well-informed, in my experience, and they generally set about educating themselves at all times. In this regard, whatever may be said of Mudaliyars and Court Interpreters I think these officials always kept their European superiors quite well-informed on such matters. Naturally nobody could have dared to mislead without finding himself caught out before long.

Comments on Interview with Mr. A.E. Goonesinha, 12 May 1966.

This interview was conducted in association with Dr. Mrs. Kumari Jayawardena who had had several interviews with Mr. Goonesinha some years back and was on fairly friendly terms with him. He was, therefore, very much at ease despite the presence of a tape-recorder. In any event he was eager to air his views on many points and expound on his own activities in the past. Aged 75 years as he is, it is natural that his memory is dim on certain points. It is noticeable, however, that the matters on which he was ready to be expansive were those on which he had already dwelt at length in his previous interviews with Dr. Kumari or in his serialised memoirs in the Colombo Observer (1965). This indicates that his store of recollections is something fixed and something which he repeatedly expands on.

But how reliable are the facts he emphasises? Does he hide or gloss over anything? This obviously varies but the answer is that he glossed over some things and that his statements can be controverted on certain points. Thus it is impossible to maintain that the Temperance Movement was not political in content or in its underlying nature; or that the 1915 riots were purely the work of hooligans; (Heaven help us if we had so many hooligans!). Not that Mr. Goonesinha was necessarily hiding things from us but that he himself chose to be blind to some facts. The views he expressed then, are essentially those of a politician who was closely involved in the political events of his day and, inevitably, full of his own prejudices. Such prejudices influenced his attitude to Britishers as well as other politicians; e.g. his opinion of S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike was no doubt coloured by the fact that he was defeated by him in the 1927 municipal elections; not that what he said of Banda is necessarily wrong.

In many ways the interview is more useful in showing Mr. Goonesinha the man. But even this needs significant qualification. It is a fact of history that Goonesinha of the 1930's was notas militant as Goonesinha of the 1910's and 1920's. 1929 can be taken as his heyday. Thereafter, he sobered. Thus the Mr. Goonesinha we hear now is far less militant than the young Mr. Goonesinha. But apart from a mellowed attitude, it is obvious that he seeks to present himself in the best possible light. That he was never a Communist is a fact. But his criticism of Bandaranaike's communalism reads strangely in view of his blatant anti Malayali cries of the 1930's; and his disapproval of violence and thuggery contrasts with the dubious methods and the use of thugs that he himself is reliably said to have employed in the 20's and 30's. There is no doubt that he drew the line at overt terrorist activity of the bomb-throwing and assassinist variety. But he was not above strong-arm tactics. It is also curious that for all his stress on his belief in <u>ahimsa</u> and non-violence he should have an admiration for Tilak.

If for nothing else, the interview is useful in revealing the various influences bearing on the evolution of a young working-class orientated radical of the 1900's and 1920's - from the works of the Liberal-nationalists of Europe and Ireland to the activities of Indian nationalists as well as radical Ceylonese like Anagarika Dharmapala. But even here the interview is essentially supplementary and Mr. G's writings in that period would be more reliable in showing the various strains and experiences which composed his thought. On the whole, Mr. G. would seem to have had a conglomeration of ideas which do not form a logical or consistent whole, but these ideas made him a radical for his day, a man of fire and spirit fighting for recognition and equal status, genuinely aware of working-class grievances and as aware of power which he could command through organisation of the working-classes. In the manner in which he stood up to British Civil Servants and the touchiness and aggressiveness with which he responded to any slights, his is the reaction of a man whom officials as well as some Ceylonese politicians tried to treat as an "untouchable".

M.W. Roberts
12.5.66

Unrecorded Information provided by Mr. Vernon H. Gunasekara during interview, 23 July 1966.

It was not difficult to hide the L.S.S.P. leaders who jumped jail while Leslie Goonewardena too - richer, well-connected, more personable than the others - was never in severe straits. Sometimes they were in the heart of Colombo. Hiding Bracegirdle was a different matter. He had sometimes to stay in the jungle, though on one occasion they had him at a small house, more a hovel, within a stone's throw of a Colombo North police station. The L.S.S.P. leaders visited him there after throwing off any police tails. The midnight interview with a Daily News reporter - taken there blindfolded - was there. Vernon wrote the script for this interview; i.e. Bracegirdle was coached. The 'only occasion' Bracegirdle strayed from 'the text' hit the headlines. He said that in Ceylon 'The blacks' hearts are white and the whites' hearts are black'.

Prior to this it was Bracegirdle who took the initiative in contacting the L.S.S.P. Vernon found it difficult to decipher his letter. He (Bracegirdle) was 'virtually illiterate'. However they decided to visit him. Vernon, Philip and Leslie(?) made the trip to the estate where Bracegirdle was a creeper. But the servants recognised the latter two. The news filtered up to the boss. Within two days Bracegirdle was sacked. He came down to Colombo and it was decided that he would help the L.S.S.P. in their campaign to form unions among the estate workers.

Bracegirdle, however, was 'a died-in-the-wool Stalinist'(he had Stalin's Selected Works with him). He postulated the principle - justifiable in many ways - that it must be the rank and file who should call the tune rather than a specific bunch of leaders; and that the leaders should in their personal life exemplify Communist principles. Thus after the deportation was declared ultra vires the Trot leaders decided that the principles etc. he was trying to spread were not desirable and promoted him to go to Britain. There was no open split but it was felt that Bracegirdle could be a nuisance. (Later he and Dr. S.A. Wickramesinghe were expelled from their London cell when they openly broke with the Communist Party.)

At one stage when I asked him whether Bracegirdle had much of a personality, he said, 'As I understand personality, no'. He did not rate him even moderately in intellectual calibre.

Vernon is convinced that the Senanayake eclique promoted D.B. Jayatilaka to ask for a Commission on the Bracegirdle affair knowing that it would discredit him. Thus a neat double-cross, playing on 'the foibles' of a man of 'weakening intellect'. To the L.S.S.P. of that time, it had been obvious that such a Commission would discredit D.B.

Philip had been expelled from the London wing of the Communist Party as a Trotskyite deviationist; thus, on ideological grounds. When Vernon was sent to London before the 1936 elections in Ceylon as a plenipotentiary seeking monetary aid for the L.S.S.P. he met 'Comrade Bradley' of the British C.P. Bradley had agreed to give support only if they expelled Phillip from their group (in Ceylon).

M.W. Roberts
23/7/66

Unrecorded Information provided by Mr. D.C.R. Gunewardena during Interview, 17 August 1966.

He could not recall the incident related by Mr. A.N. Strong when he (Gunewardena) was at the receiving end of arrogant behaviour from a military officer in Matara Kachcheri.

His attitude on the subject of arrogance and racial superiority shown by the British was that such characteristics are found in all races. He alluded to the manner in which Sinhalese refer to their Aryan stock and the use of the word "Aryan".

While on the subject of arrogance, he asked me if I knew of Hodson. On one occasion when he was P.M., Dandegamuwa, Hodson was G.A. North-Western Province and, as such, Inspector of the Courts as well. Gunewardena had his own ideas on punishment; he did not believe in lashes. The Police must have complained re his "leniency" for Hodson called on him on the subject. He happened to be holding court and was seeing to the roll-call. Hodson appeared and excusing himself said that he wished to see Gunewardena. G. asked him to wait in the Chambers as he was busy. After ten minutes G. was able to go into the chambers and meet Hodson but was only able to give him a few minutes. Hodson appeared annoyed at having been kept waiting but G. told him that he should have informed him earlier re this visit and added that the lawyers had resented his intrusion. However, the matter was discussed. Eventually Hodson reported: "This man is temperamentally unfitted to hold the reins of justice in a criminal area". This report was sent back to G. by the Attorney-General's Department. G. wrote simply: "I am inclined to agree".

Later he was under Hodson in Kandy. Hodson had quipped about the matter and never bore him ill-will. They had got on well, to the point of freely criticising each other. Throughout, Mr. G. stressed that Hodson was "a very decent fellow" though he had a reputation for highhandedness. Apparently on one occasion in the urban council in Kurunegala Hodson had even punched A.B.(?) de Soysa(?) on the chest. De Soysa had promptly filed a plaint. Hodson had pleaded guilty and paid the fine.

M.W. Roberts
17/8/66.

Comments on Interview with Mr. A.S. Harrison, 22 January, 1966.

Mrs. Harrison sat in at the interview and therefore this recording is a three-way affair. Both of them were friendly and quite eager to talk about Ceylon days. Very interested in the topics raised, Mr. Harrison was very frank in his views - and one could say, extremely unrestrained though on some points he showed some caution and alarm after he had supplied his views i.e. after his lack of restraint; but this was not unnatural when one considers that he accused a colleague and superior of making his life difficult for him as well as being responsible for 'losing' an important memorandum.

Quite lively and sprightly for his age, Mr. Harrison was undoubtedly a livewire in his day and secured very quick promotion. I am fairly certain that this was not due to any emphasis on self-seeking but the result of genuine ability allied with considerable drive and imagination, In the educational sphere he appears to have been a progressive for his day and even took a great delight in battling it out with the diehards. It is clear that during the interview Mr. Harrison presented himself as a livewire, a reformer, and a man with an original and sharp mind, but I am inclined to think he was one. He was certainly not a man who would move on stereotyped lines. He was ready to be very critical of men and of Government. He agreed with many of the sharp criticisms raised by Stace, Newnham and Company. Many of the wider or ancillary issues I raised interested him greatly and he saw the point at once. Indeed, many of these matters were not new to him and one would, therefore, infer that he had fairly wide interests and a lively mind. One might think that the way he presented himself also indicated conceit. Possibly, but he certainly had, and has, ability above the common.

Both his candidness and his ability are seen in his views on individuals. He was ready to make severely detrimental remarks about many Civil Servants, even those he had known as friends. The mediocrity and dumbness he assigned to Sir T. Southorn, and the stolidness he labelled Sir W.L. Murphy and Wodeman with, are appraisals which have support in many interviews. In my view it takes a man who is not stereotyped and who is sharp in mind to distinguish between those who are stolid and stereotyped and those who are not, and, therefore, this outlook is much in Mr. Harrison's favour - the more so in that his assessments have collaboration from other sources and in that he was not wholly laudatory. Much as he admired Denham, he indicated his conceit and pomposity (rather tempered her, but Denham was his friend). He had a higher regard for Stanley than Newnham, Strong, Davidson and Company as indeed had Mr. Mulhall who felt Stanley to have been underestimated.

On the whole a very interesting interview. Mr. Harrison is the only official from the Education Department whom I have interviewed.

Above all, he served in the C.P.R.C. ranks during the 1915 riots and was able to give a relatively unbiased account of his impressions. As a ranker with intelligence above the ordinary, his impressions on General Malcolm and the steps taken by Government are very, very useful.

M.W. Roberts
24.1.66.

Mr. Harrison-Jones' Answers to Questions forwarded by M.W. Roberts, 18 January 1966.

C. Harrison-Jones, C.C.S., 1907-1937, b. 1884.

Jan. 1909:	P.M., Puttalum
July 1910:	A.G.A., Colombo & Negombo
April 1912:	Acting A.G.A., Hambantota
....	
Dec. 1919:	D.J., Tangalle
June 1920:	A.G.A., Matara
Nov. 1924:	A.G.A., Nuwara Eliya
May 1927:	Acting G.A., Eastern Province
Jan. 1929:	G.A., Eastern Province
Nov. 1932:	G.A., North West Province
Nov. 1935:	G.A., South Province

Mr. Harrison-Jones is not well and, on his own admission, not mentally alive. Indeed he seems to have exhausted himself mentally in answering a section of the questionnaire and could not send answers on the rest. Naturally his answers must be evaluated in this light.

Mr. Harrison-Jones' Answers to Questions Forwarded by M.W. Roberts, 18 January, 1966.

1. As a Cadet and an O.A. did you find that the older Civil Servants tended to treat you with scant respect and a kind of amused tolerance? Would you have liked greater responsibility than that which was given to you? Were you treated as a dogsbody?

Answer:
Not myself though I followed L.S. Woolf at Jaffna (and later at Hambantota) except perhaps by my first G.A., the eccentric F.H. Price. No, but I may have been exceptional and was almost throughout more highly regarded by most High Officials and even Ministers e.g. D. S. Senanayake and Macan Markar than I deserved.

2. Did the British habit of empirical training - sending officers out into the country to learn for themselves - hold true in your case? Could you have done with more training and discussion? Without wishing to overstress the uses of theory do you think courses like those they subsequently had in Oxbridge would have helped you?

Answer:
It holds true in my case except that poor linguists like myself would have been helped by a grounding in Sinhalese and/or Tamil at Oxbridge. I think my son (Malaya C.S. 1939 to '43 died as P.O.W.) benefited by his course at Oxford.

3. Did you feel that there was too great a reliance on precedence and that routine dominated administration to an undue extent?

Answer:
No, not for what was desired or thought necessary by the great bulk of the Ceylonese population up to 1939.

4. While in the field did you feel that provincial or central H.Q. tended to be obstructionist and unreceptive to new ideas?

Answer:
Not much as A.G.A. and G.A. except the Directors of Irrigation. I found Col. Sec. Fletcher helped me in combating this.

5. In the period pre 1931 did you feel that in matters large or small there was a tendency to preserve the status quo and a policy of quieta non movere?

Answer:

I did not feel it much then as I was unknowingly a Conservative though brought up as a Liberal. I considered that the Govt. policy was on the whole "Festina Lente" which until recently I believed had worked with great success in Ceylon with its thousands of years of civilisation and a century of benignant British rule as contrasted with the rush in much of savage Africa.

6. In this same period did you feel that there was a lack of purpose, drive and imagination in policy, particularly in the sense of ultimate ideals? Was there a tendency to seek efficiency as an end in itself?

Answer:

I did not feel it then. Later I have felt that it was only Clifford (the last one would expect!) who had the imagination to realise that Ceylon must proceed more quickly to self-government though he can hardly have had that as his ideal.

7. Due to pressure of business was the Secretariat a bottleneck by the 1910's? by the 1920's? If so, why wasn't anything done to solve this problem?

Answer:

My old friend Sir Mark Young could best answer this. In the mid '20's he and J.A. Maybin worked regularly late into the night. (Possibly with other intelligent unofficials). H.L. de Mel made some protest about this. Somehow or other Sir B.H. Bourdillon (though Sir Mark had already left Ceylon), perhaps by force of example(!), managed to reduce the overtime but I don't know if or how he and Sir H. Stanley somehow reduced the pressure of business.

8. Were the Gansabhas useful administrative bodies? If so, in what way?

Answer:

I believe I found the Gansabhawas did useful work in their way but cannot remember in what way.

9. What were their shortcomings?

Answer:

In many cases they thought their powers were greater than they actually were.

10. Did A.G.A's have to keep pushing vel vidanes and gansabhas to ensure that their work was done?

Answer:

I seem to remember we had to push the Vel Vidanes (through the Chief Headman or the Korala or Vidane Arachi).

11. Did the villagers prefer the Police Courts to the Village Tribunals?

Answer:

The simpler villagers preferred the V.T. but the more cantankerous and revengeful preferred the Police Court.

12. Do you think the people corrupted the Courts in that they used them as instruments of revenge and oppression?

Answer:

I think that all too many of the people worried the younger Police Magistrates with their cases (many of them false) they brought to further revenge and oppression but I don't think they actually corrupted the Courts.

13. Did the British bring law rather than justice?

Answer:

We often thought that we were for justice but the Appeal Court for strict law (not Wood Renton, the friend of the good, conscientious P.M.).

14. Where the majority of land disputes were concerned could a Magistrate or Judge on the bench get to the heart of the matter without having all the village deeds before him and without knowing the configuration of the land?

Answer:

Even the P.M. would often require to know the configuration of the land. The D.J. or C.R. needed also the village deeds and inspected the land if he reasonably could, i.e. if it did not too much upset the hearing of the Court's many other cases.

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15. In this sense would it not have been more ideal to put a Civil Servant in charge of a smaller territorial unit and provide him with judicial and executive powers in the former Indian and Ceylonese tradition rather than having larger territorial units with two Civil Servants handling judicial and executive duties separately?

Answer:

I believe the territorial units in Ceylon were small in comparison with India. But even so it would have been more ideal to put a Civil Servant in charge of a "smaller ... separately". But in little Ceylon with its comparatively high proportion of Ceylonese educated in English ideas the lawyers and many others demanded the separation of the Judiciary from the Administrative.

16. Did you think that the politicians of your time suffered from an inferiority complex which stimulated aggressiveness? Did many of them have an exaggerated sense of self-importance?

Answer:

(a) Yes. (b) Yes, more than most of us have.

17. What sort of bodes were the temperance societies of the first few decades of the 19th century? Were their meetings political meetings under the cloak of temperance?

Answer:

(a) Can't remember. (b) When I was the first appointed A.G.A. Colombo District (1910-12) and later at Matara I thought some of the Temperance Societies meetings were really political meetings under the cloak of temperance.

18. One aspect of 19th century British policy was to foster the growth of an educated Ceylonese elite. Yet when this elite emerged on to the stage they were - as in 1909-10 - denied the right to any significant share of power - partly on the ground that they did not represent the masses. Would you comment on this?

Answer:

Very few of the educated Ceylonese elite represented the wishes of the masses at that time. I think they did to a great extent represent them in the coast towns of the maritime provinces, e.g. Moratuva.

19-27 Questions on 1915 riots.

28. Did the advice and the stories related to the authorities by certain Ceylonese have anything to do with these arrests [i.e. arrest of the Temperance leaders]?

Answer:

After my return I believe I came across some good hearsay evidence that some of these stories did lead to arrests.

42. In the 1910's and 1920's were the turn of events in India held to have implications for Ceylon? Personally, did you reflect upon such events? Were they socially discussed?

Answer:

(a) Not much; we were very insular ` (b) Personally I did reflect a good deal but that was probably as the History of British India had been my Special Subject (c) Yes, discussed in themselves but not with the idea that they affected Ceylon much. I remember our great indignation about Amritsar and the treatment of Brig-General Dyer.

43. Would it be correct to say that after the 1924 Constitution the centre of gravity shifted from the Executive Council to the Finance Committee?

Answer:

Correct, so it seems to me now.

44. Did Government rarely defy this Committee though having the constitutional power to do so? If so, why? Was it to prevent the Constitution being brought to a standstill or was it from a desire to placate the politicians and prevent them from adopting Indian extremes?

Answer:

Yes. It seemed to me that it was to prevent the Constitution being brought to a standstill when Clifford explained it to a gathering of a few G.A's and other senior Civil Servants early in 1927 before he left Ceylon. I did not know anything about it"adopting Indian extremes".

Comments on Interview with Mr. A.C.M. Hingley, 16 January, 1966.

Mr. Hingley is one of the relatively younger generation of Civil Servants and in quite vigorous health. On the other hand service in several other colonies following that in Ceylon has had its influence in wiping out or diminishing his Ceylonese memories.

I found him very candid and helpful. An able and business-like man, he was and is conservative by nature. He emphasised the fact that as a young officer he did not concern himself with the political questions and many of the wider aspects of policy, but got on with his job. This would suggest that he moved on stereotyped lines. But I feel that he had a mind and the sort of drive which would be quite ready to prompt action that was unorthodox, though I would not vouch for it. His experience in African countries in the 1940's and 1950's could not but make him conscious of constitutional problems by the time of our interview but on the whole I should think he was not politically-minded, though more so than Naish, Sandys, etc. He is one of the few Civil Servants who felt that Ceylon was not ready for independence in 1945-46.

I am uncertain how to rate his assessments of personnel - a high billing, I think. He was hardly inhibited even in this sphere and was ready to criticise.

Since he went to Ceylon in 1932 only, my range of questions was limited.

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M.W. Roberts
18.1.66

Confidential and Unrecorded Information provided by Mr. A.C.M.Hingley, 16 January, 1966.

Collins, he considered, a "pedestrian little man"; a chap who worried a lot and gave the impression that some problems virtually drove him to tear his hair and strew papers about; enormously industrious.

Tilney and Phillipson were officers "in the right niche". Tilney was the right type for the Treasury.

Hingley, too, felt that Newnham was of higher calibre than Wodeman. Newnham, of course, could be "acid" and tended to "get people's back up" though Hingley himself had nothing against him. (Note that Sir Charles Hartwell also remarked that, from this point of view, "Newnham was his own worst enemy.")

M.W. Roberts
18.1.66

Comments on Interview with H.A.J. Hulugalle, 18 August 1966.

Starting as a young journalist in the Daily News in 1918 Mr. Hulugalle eventually rose to the position of editor. Subsequently he served as Director of Information and in ambassadorial posts, largely under the patronage of the U.N.P. in the 1940's and 1950's.

His outlook, therefore, was essentially right-wing and conservative. Thus, hardly partial to Banda and his associates.

In recent years he has taken to historical and biographical books and articles, his most notable contribution being The Life and Times of D.R. Wijewardena. Judged by these works, he could be classed as able but not brilliant. Some of his works certainly lack depth and even the above-named biography could have been improved on.

On the whole the interview confirmed the fact that he was of average ability. His interests were fairly wide but this was as it should be. Glancing over his thumb-nail sketches of individuals, however, I am struck by his fairness and perceptiveness for many of his remarks are confirmed by other sources. As examples I would cite his appraisal of Fletcher, E.W. Perera, Tyrrell, Stanley, Arunachalam and Alexander.

As an onlooker and observer of the national scene in the 1920's to 1940's he could not but have been nationalistic in outlook. But his attitude to British rule was fair and even perhaps a trifle benign. He was certainly not of the extreme wing. This had its uses, particularly in his assessment of individual Britons. But it also meant that he could not reveal much about the left wing, its frame of thought, etc. I think, however, that I should have questioned him about Goonesinha, trade-unionism and the L.S.S.P.

I was very interested in his views on the origins of the split between Sinhalese and Tamil leaders in the period around 1920-21. He tried to look at this historically and chronologically; and dived into his book on Wijewardena and read portions of it, rather straining my patience in the process because I had read the book and preferred succinct answers to specific queries. I do not think he shed much light on the problem but what he says is of some interest. On D.S., and his group of lieutenants, on D.R. and his relationship with D.S. I think he provided some useful information.

The fact that he dismissed men like Victor Corea and Batuwantudawe as "men of little substance" is perhaps worthy of notice in the outlook it reflects.

Regarding the reliability of facts that he presents, of course, it will be obvious that they have to be crosschecked with care. Confirmation from other sources is needed in the case of points made by Civil Servants ~~as well~~ simply because of the lapse of time, but in their case they are often stating facts relating to subjects which they administered. Hulugalle is perforce talking of what others did. Reliability is one notch further removed.

M.W. Roberts
22/8/66

UNRECORDED INTERVIEW WITH MR. H.A.J. HULUGALLE, 18 AUGUST 1966.

[Mr. Hulugalle was a journalist in Ceylonese-run English language newspapers from 1918-19.]

The British were "politic" and "astute" in keeping the balance between the communities. Thus the communal problem did not "rise to the top". In 1910 he can recall that when his brother won an agricultural scholarship, the scholarships were divided among the communities.

I inquired whether the G.A's and A.G.A's knew the people better than did the rising politicians and represented their needs better (as Clifford maintained in 1909-10). He was inclined to agree but said this was not "entirely correct". They knew the people's needs; particularly ~~so~~ in those days when fast communications were lacking and horses were used ~~when~~ they definitely knew the people better than in more recent times. However, there were linguistic differences.

In the elections for the Educated Ceylonese seat in 1910 (Sir) Marcus Fernando lost to (Sir) P. Ramanathan, a Tamil. The Sinhalese were split on this occasion because many of the high caste Sinhalese were opposed to a Karawa (Fernando). Thus Hector Jayawardena, J.R's uncle, was one of Ramanathan's chief aides.

In the late 1910's and the 1920's Ramanathan had become philosophical and rather withdrawn. His brother Arunachalam was more "down to earth"; he was a "bureaucrat who wanted to get things done". Arunachalam was particularly indignant at the way Ceylonese in the Civil and Public Services were shunted into jobs of lesser importance and at the slow rate of Ceylonisation. In April 1917 he delivered an interesting talk on "Our Political Needs". This proved to be the spark and "the starting point of the Ceylon National Congress" (I can recall that either Prof. Rodrigo or Mr. Hulugalle mentioned that even the use of the word "Congress" had horrified some Ceylonese). Arunachalam was "a typical public servant, intellectually conscious of his superiority"; "not a very approachable chap". In his interviews he "laid down the law". But this attitude was common to most public servants and was a "hangover" from old colonial times. Arunachalam and other Ceylonese belonged to the group who "had not got their due". Arunachalam had "great driving force"; (Sir) James Pieris was eminent but did not have his drive or courage.

I inquired into the split between the Tamil and Sinhalese leaders of the time; and whether it originated before 1920. He said, "No, it was about that time" (i.e., 1920). The scheme of political reform suggested by Government in 1920 included territorial representation. The Tamils were "not ready for this" [Note that Manning's suggestions did not go very far and all the Ceylonese were dissatisfied; the proposals were severely condemned.] When at this stage Congress decided to accept Government's suggestion that a delegation should be sent to discuss the matter and effect a compromise, Arunachalam refused to join the delegation when he was invited to do so. Thus the delegation was a purely Sinhalese group. The split was at this point. The "overt reason" for the split was the City of Colombo seat which was contested by James Pieris and Arunachalam [Mr. Hulugalle read some extracts from his book at this stage]. I referred to one of the versions regarding this contest: namely, that Arunachalam had been approached as a possible candidate but refused, expecting to be asked again and reacting unfavourably when James Pieris was put forward. Mr. Hulugalle was quite adamant that this version was incorrect. He said that the Senanayake brothers and others were behind Sir James Pieris. The battle was for the prestige of the Colombo seat. Many of the Congress leaders had been opposed to a special seat in the Western Province for the Tamils. (In effect, Mr. Hulugalle was implying that the policy of some of the Sinhalese leaders contributed to the split; but equally clearly, he felt the Tamils also contributed.) Ramanathan had always been against territorial representation and political democracy and had once said that "the counting of heads results in the freedom of the wild ass". At this particular point in our history, Ramanathan was taking a leading part "behind the scenes". An outcome of the contest for the Colombo seat was the formation of the Tamil Mahapana Sabha in 1921. This had been formed by Ramanathan and Arunachalam.[1] They sent two memorials to H.M's Government.

I inquired whether Manning had encouraged these divisions by encouraging the Tamils. He said that Arunachalam did not mix with Manning but Ramanathan "worked with" Manning. Manning was "not a political animal", he thought. He was not interested in the internecine quarrels but wanted a viable Constitution. His idea was to hold the balance between the communities. He was "a decent fellow" and was fairly popular by the time he left Ceylon. Of course, in these days all the Governors, excepting, perhaps, Caldecott, had to indulge in some "horse-trading". Even of Caldecott, it was said that he had had deals. Hulugalle knows that Jennings did not think highly of him.

I inquired whether C.H.Z. Fernando had been put up to contest C.E. Corea and E.T. De Silva in the Chilaw area in 1924 because

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[1] James T. Rutnam, in his interview, insisted that Arunachalam had little to do in originating it, and that it was the Jaffna crowd of Kanagasabai, Duraiswamy, etc. who were behind it. The reader will see, therefore, that this is a controversial subject and that a lot is obscure and uncertain.

the anti-Tamil Sinhalese group felt that Corea and De Silva were cooperating too much with the Tamils and had sold away some of the Sinhalese rights. He did not think this was correct. It was "nothing political". It was merely a case of "trying to snatch a seat". The caste issue arose because there were Karawa Christians in that area and C.H.Z. was one; he was also pretty able.

On my inquiries, he said that with the 1924 reforms, power shifted from the Executive Council to the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council. The system was alright with a strong Colonial Secretary but not good under a weak one. Fletcher was "a nice chap and gentle", but "weak". I inquired whether Fletcher & Co. were trying to work a difficult Constitution by compromise and were perhaps seeking popularity. He merely said that Fletcher and the others probably saw signs of the times.

Of Thomson, he said: "not bad; on the whole, good;" "his first innings was good". Of Clementi: people like D.S. Senanayake liked and respected him. "On the whole a very successful public servant" for he had won kudos in other colonies as well. Clifford: was "quite liberal" as Governor; "very eccentric"; started Ceylon on "this agricultural business". Stanley: was "shrewd", "Jewish"; "He was a good type of Jew, not arrogant", but "humanistic". In reply to my inquiry whether Stanley was genuinely sympathetic towards the aspirations of the Ceylonese, he said that he was.

There were always people (in Ceylon) who were suspicious of the Briton. Thus even when the British showed sympathy and consideration it was "construed as cunning". There was, therefore, "a barrier".

E.W. Perera could not shake off "the Victorian, Gladstonian approach" to political affairs; he was not statesmanlike. He implied that many of our politicians in the 1920's were not far-seeing. Only D.S. had sensed the economic and agricultural needs of the country; to some extent Marcus Fernando had, earlier on.

I made inquiries re British rule; whether it lacked purpose etc. He said that there was "no imagination". Their policy was "to let sleeping dogs lie". They developed "a section of the economy" and "made the country viable".

I put some questions regarding the political attack on British land policy and on the Land Settlement Department, pointing to the suspicions that some of the politicians concerned were speculators themselves. He said that "on the whole, the Land Settlement Officers were honourable people". They worked on principles of equity. He did not think there was "anything fundamentally immoral about it". He did not think that the expansion of estates was a bad thing. On my suggesting various politicians' names, he said that Victor Corea "was not a man of any substance" and "carried little weight as a politician". He did not shed any light as to whether he was a speculator but seemed to think he was a bad hat. Of his brother C.E. Corea he said that the (C.E.) was "much more idealistic" than Victor. C. Batuwantudawe and Boyagoda (who was a Kegalla man) were men of no great importance. Batuwantudawe was often bankrupt. He became a Minister from 1931-36 purely by chance and was very lucky to be one. Boyagoda indulged in a lot of litigation. Meedeniya Adigar, Vanderpooten, F.L. Goonewardena, Ruxton and Berry were chaps who used "to buy and sell" land, especially relating to temples and plantation companies. There was a real "free-for-all" in this sphere.

E.B. Alexander was a good G.A., not particularly brilliant but a good type. "I liked Alexander". Freeman led a simple, austere life. Hellings was "a bit of a sahib". Fraser was "able up to a point". In response to a further query, he agreed that Fraser was rather of the old school. F.J. Smith was "the strong, silent type". Denham was "able". So too was Woods. Woods often fought the home authorities for the colonial point of view. He got on well with D.S. Wait was "a nice honourable fellow". Newnham was "very clever, very quick and rather cynical". Young was "a clever fellow". Tyrrell was a typical G.A.; average ability. Much the same could be said of Collins. Both of them were good provincial officers. Maybin was "particularly able". Brayne "probably was more sympathetic than some of these chaps". He got into trouble sometimes over his schemes; for example, he started cooperative credit banks which were not viable. Reid "got a lot of things done" and was the best Chairman of the Colombo Municipal Council in the twentieth century. Some of the Civil Servants were very good at "jobs of work" but when it came to politicians they ran into trouble.

The Donoughmore Constitution was "an interesting device"; it was doubtful if it was given a fair chance. He agreed that the Ceylonese political opposition to this Constitution was due to a blind attachment to the Westminster model. There was a tendency to pick holes. The Constitution had had aspects. There was a great deal of interference in appointments and in matters relating to tenders. The Executive Committees could sometimes be bribed; i.e. not all were bribed. But a few who held the balance of the vote could be. I questioned him closely on the position of the Officers-of-State and the extent of friction between them and the politicians but got very little information of value. He said that the existence of these three posts annoyed the Ceylonese. Regarding personnel, he agreed that Tyrrell was rigid and without imagination.

I asked him whether D.S. and his associates sought to reduce the political position of E.W. Perera because he was a potential challenger to the future post of Prime Minister; and had worked for his defeat in 1936 and 1943. He did not think E.W. was such a threat to D.S.; he "did not have it in him"; he was a good student and a good writer but did not carry the guns necessary to take on the leadership. He was "not a constructive force of any kind". He should, however, have been a Minister. The first Ministries were "a gamble". There was no reason for Batuwantudawe or Periya Sundaram to be Ministers. C.W.W. Kannangara was a "great pal" of E.W. Perera's but "broke away" from him and became a Minister working with D.S. and crowd.

In reply to my queries, he agreed that D.S. Senanayake had a body of trusted lieutenants whom he consulted on agrarian and other matters. Among the older set of Civil Servants, these were P. Saravanamuttu, C.L. Wickremasinghe, H.E.Jansz(?) and L.L. Hunter. "Poulier"? I asked. He did not think Poulier was consulted all that much. Among the younger set, A.G. Ranasinha, Richard Aluwihare and L.J. de S. Seneviratne were part of his caucus (this is a word I used). D.S. was not a very articulate writer or speaker. He got others to write for him. Jennings used to write a lot of his speeches, etc. As Director of Information, Hulugalle himself wrote some. The fact that he was not a good reader made him a good thinker. He "had a profound instinct for the right thing".

O.E. Goonetilleke was D.S's "handyman". I inquired whether O.E. had worked it so that he got the job of Civil Defence Commissioner whereas C.L. Wickremasinghe was more obviously in line for it. Mr. Hulugalle did not think so. I think he said that O.E.G. was one of D.S's friends and lieutenants from early days. (If he did not, someone else did; in any event I have subsequently ascertained that this was so.) Mr. Hulugalle added that C.L. was a man of integrity with no eye for the main chance. He would balance matters. O.E.G. acted and hanged the consequences. He was the more obvious choice for this wartime job.

I inquired about D.R. Wijewardena's role and influence. He said that D.R. and D.S. had been friends for a long time. D.S. and Company went to him to get publicity. I questioned him on how Jennings got hauled into the team. He was not certain but added that D.R. may have brought them together as he was interested in University College and would have known Jennings. Jennings put into words what D.S. was groping for.

I asked him what he thought of S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike. He said: "an ambitious politician, fairly well-equipped". "Was he an opportunist?" I asked. "On the whole, yes" was the reply. Regarding his defection in 1951 I pointed out that Banda had been promised the succession to the Premiership but found himself being edged out. He did not think that Banda had been promised the succession in so many words. He was the Leader of the House. In the normal course of events he would have been P.M., "if patient, if loyal" - implying that he had not been so. Sir John may have provoked him but all he had to do was stick it out, he implied. Banda was "intellectually very superior" to the others and "showed it". The Obeyesekere family were always arrogant. Even at St. Thomas where Hulugalle had been at school in Banda's time, young Banda was inclined to be clever and to belittle. "Did he have a touch of megalomania?" I inquired. "Yes, very much" was the reply. He added that he must have had an inferiority complex at Oxford. I said that many European Civil Servants felt that he had a chip on his shoulder against Europeans. He thought so too. I inquired how Banda was as an administrator. He said: "Lazy", and implied that he was a bad one and rather impractical. He added that as Minister of Local Govt. he had also had a very lazy man as Permanent Secretary, namely E.W. Kannangara. As a Minister he had tried to build up Village Committees but this was with an eye to electoral purposes (i.e. to extend his personal influence).

Comments on Interview with Mr. H.S.M.Hoare, 29.12.1965

He was hardly restrained by the tape. A candid man. He set afterwards that he pulled his punches a little - this was in connection with comments and appraisals of individuals and it was only natural that he did so and did not reveal the more outrageous stories.

Mr.Hoare is now 61 years old - still hale and hearty and quite with it - . Indeed he teaches Latin etc. at a preparatory school.

Mr. Hoare the man, I think, would not be the sort who would kill himself working i.e. not noticeably conscientious; indeed, several of his answers reveal that he was inclined to think an idyllic life the thing to be sort after. A somewhat flippant attitude to life and affairs. Genial. Some bonhomie. Fond of wisecracks and backchat. I found it easy to be at ease with him; though some of the trivialities and anecdotes might possibly get one down in time.

A classicist, he has (and had) some snobbishness and elitist feeling , but he is quite conscious of this fact. If in Ceylon one generation earlier he might, perhaps, have been very like Stubbs in his attitude to political questions; but temperamentally he was not like Stubbs in his attitude to routine work and administrative matters. Deliberately against the died-in-the -wool, tradition-bound practices; he was fond of short cuts and inclined to cut across red-tape. In this sense he would have been an initiator but one wonders how far his inclination to 'laziness' might have worked against initiating tough new tasks.

The above description must not be held to reveal lack of depth in his thinking. I would hesitate to give an opinion either way on this point.A good brain and quite practical once he got down to it, I should have thought. A shrewd judge of men I should think: certainly not easy to please him here. On political matters his reference to Bracegirdle as a 'Bolshie' and his tendency to think the Donoughmore Constitution 'premature'(??) indicate a degree of the conservatism so typical of the British and of the C.C.S. in particular.

Since Mr. Hoare did not serve extensively in the provinces and since his Colombo posts were largely in the Customs or during wartime, the range of questions I had was limited. Therefore, and given his candidness, I tended to concentrate on the personal angle. I think the fruits were pretty good here - a rich assortment of views and facts.

M.W.Roberts

28.11.65

Comments on Interview with Mr. P.J. Hudson, C.B.E., M.C., 15 January, 1966.

Son of an I.C.S. man and partly brought up in India, Mr. Hudson was somewhat worried by the fact that his views were going on record; he wanted an arrangement whereby any leading questions could be put when the recorder was not on, while at the end of the interview he asked me to regard the interview as confidential. Thus it is clear that he would be very guarded. At the same time he stated that his memories were very hazy. This was, in fact, so on some points.

I would say quite certainly - and I believe he revealed this clearly himself - that he was not a politically-minded officer. Indeed his views were extremely short-sighted in this field and his impression of the average Ceylonese politician, whatever their faults, was a fantastic and wholly incorrect caricature and reveals profound ignorance cum prejudice. On general administrative problems his outlook cannot be regarded as particularly enterprising, or his interests regarded as wide. Though he was far from being a fool, I should think he moved in the normal grooves. I also suspect that he had a pronounced tendency to follow the path of least resistance.

From the interviewing point of view I found him discursive and prolix; what was worse, he was infuriatingly slow in his speech and sometimes drove me (impatient fellow that I am) to distraction. As a result, I was only able to cover two areas; Administrative and Land Settlement, during 1 hour 40 minutes on the spool, and both only partially. I had intended concentrating on Land Settlement in any event during this interview because of his long experience in this field, but I was rather annoyed with myself for not having got onto the subject from the word go, because there was much more I could have raised in this sphere as well as in regard to the working of the system of indefeasible leasehold.

Given his guardedness the failure to cover such aspects as Ceylonisation, British arrogance, the Donoughmore Constitution and constitutional questions was no great loss, though I am sure that he would have had something to say on the Gansabhas, the Headman system and the Cooperative and Rural Marketing movements. I would probably have refrained from asking for his views on individual Governors, Civil Servants and politicians, in any event.

Despite all these drawbacks I feel this was a useful interview simply because Land Settlement is an important subject and his evidence in this field was useful, though far short of Frank Leach's contribution in vividity, depth or volume.

M.W. Roberts
15.1.66

Answers provided by Colonel Charles Jeffries to Questions forwarded by M.W. Roberts, 25 June 1967.

Extract from letter

Thank you for your letter of the 26th May. I am honoured by your request for help, and will gladly meet it as far as I can, though I am afraid that may not be very far. My memory of 20 years ago is not at all comprehensive and I have no documents to which I can refer. You will also understand that I did not deal with Ceylon affairs in the Colonial Office until 1946 and I was not a party to the discussions which took place with Mr. Senanayake before that date.

Before trying to deal with your questions seriatim I should make a general observation, which arises out of your final question, and is referred to on page 102 of my book. So far as the Colonial Office was concerned, events in India had very little bearing on the matter. India was not a Colony and her relations with the U.K. were dealt with by a different department and on quite different lines from the relations of colonies. From the Colonial Office point of view Ceylon could have continued as a colony just as easily and naturally after the grant of Dominion status to India as before. Of course people in Ceylon did not see it that way, but that was the actual position. Ceylon was not following a precedent set by India, but creating a precedent to be followed by other colonial territories. The U.K. attitude cannot be fully appreciated unless this basic fact is grasped.

Now for the questions, some of which, in the light of the above, will not need very long answers.

1. Did the fact that India had already (before the end of World War 11) been promised dominion status bear appreciably on the decision of the Soulbury Commission to suggest measures which went a long way towards full responsible government in Ceylon (with a view towards eventual dominion status through the growth of conventions)? i.e. was it felt that once India was given dominion status one couldn't hold the reins on Ceylon?

   Answer:
   See above.

2. With respect to India, nevertheless, isn't it true that the promise of dominion status did not mean immediate independence in post war years and the eventual transfer (1947?) on Earl

Mountbatten's advice was much earlier than anticipated?

Answer:

I don't know enough about the Indian question to be able to answer.

3. When Mr. D.S. Senanayake was in London in July(?) - August 1945 and it was clear that he would request an immediate grant of dominion status, didn't Viscount Hall and his aides initially state their willingness - possibly verbally - to support this request? but eventually, and with some regret, say that this was not possible?

Answer:

I don't know.

4. (a) Wasn't this decision [3 above] the result of a Cabinet discussion?
   (b) and <u>largely</u> on the grounds that the future of India (in the sense of the timing of the steps towards dominion status) had to be decided on first?

Answer:

(a) Probably.

(b) Yes, to the extent that India was a separate and immediate issue and the question of independence for any colonial territories was not likely to be taken up until India was out of the way.

5. Would it be correct to say that the fact that it was a new government which was handling the issue also contributed to this cautious decision in the sense that the Labour Government needed time to familiarise itself with the problem and did not want to rush matters (having to consider the possibility of domestic criticism that they were presiding over an unduly hasty dismemberment of the Empire)? Could one go further and argue that a Conservative Government might have granted such a request in that their ministers would have been familiar with the history of the Ceylon case?

Answer:

While the Labour government, being new, naturally needed time to consider, I have no reason whatever to suppose that a Conservative government would have acceded more promptly to Ceylon's request. On the whole, the Labour Party was probably more favourable, ideologically, to independence for colonies than the Conservatives had been up to that time.

6. Referring to these policy decisions of 1945-46 in "Ceylon the Path to Independence" (p. 110 lines 34-40), you seem to imply that representations were made (I do not mean to imply these were improper) by interests in Britain that it was wise to hang on to Ceylon as long as possible in view of the departure from India. I have noted your conjectural form of "may have"; but would I be free to take it that in your position in the C.O. you would have seen (or heard) of any representations to this effect? (b) Again, it would follow that one of these "sections of British opinion" you refer to would be that of the navy, in view of Ceylon's strategic position.

Answer:

I don't remember any specific representations. Obviously the point of view which I have indicated was one of those which had to be taken into account.

7. Following from 5 above, could it be argued that one factor contributing to the decision of the Labour Government to say "Yes" to Senanayake's repeated request in 1947 was partly due to the fact that they were now familiar with the issue?

Answer:

Partly, no doubt, but I would not attach great importance to this.

8. Would it be correct to say that Mr. Creech-Jones was more decisive and persuasive (especially vis-a-vis the Cabinet) than Viscount Hall? Indeed, I came to this conclusion when reading between the lines of "Ceylon The Path to Independence", but am, of course, not quite certain about this.

Answer:

I don't know how Creech Jones and Hall compared in their persuasiveness in Cabinet. But Creech Jones was, of course, an expert in colonial affairs and personally dedicated to a liberal policy.

9. I know that (Sir) Oliver and D.S.S. used the argument: "What hasn't Ceylon done that India and Burma has?" (your book: p. 114 also implies this) in 1947. Didn't they employ it in late 1945 - early 1946 as well?

Answer:

Very likely, but I have no imformation about that.

10. (a) Did the state of anarchy in India (no doubt largely communal but containing anti-British nationalism) influence the British Government's decision to grant dominion status to Ceylon in that it was felt that cautiousness re Ceylon would only exarcebate feelings and cause disruption? (b) To which view the Leftist-oriented strikes of 1946-47 in Colombo added fuel? (c) Indeed, how far is it correct to say that D.S.S. and (Sir) Oliver argued that the British Government should let them deal with this threat and even reduce it (the agitation) by diverting Ceylonese opinion to the fact of complete Independence (with its celebrations and all that)?

Answer:

None of this was particularly relevant, so far as I know.

11. In Ceylon, today, it is commonly believed that Ceylon received her independence in 1948 because it was the logical outcome of the transfer of authority in India and a colonial Ceylon was meaningless without British domination of India. Any comments?

Answer:

See above. So far as I and my colleagues were concerned, we looked forward to the achievement of independence by our colonial territories and found it natural that Ceylon, the "premier Colony" should be first in the field. We should have liked to have had the opportunity to carry the economic and social development of the country a little further before handing over responsibility, but we accepted the fact that nationalist sentiment in Ceylon was too strong to admit of this.

Comments on Interview with Mr. H.C. King, 8 January 1966.

Mr. King was quite fit and mentally awake. He obviously wished to be rather careful for he had not wanted a recorded interview. I found him a very pleasant man and very homely. But the interview itself was hardly of real value. Much of what can be said in this regard is in my summary of this interview. On the whole his information was vague and/or irrelevant, if not non-existent.

On the whole too, he had a mixed collection of views. He can be considered somewhat radical in his outlook on the missionary schools, his point that the tendency to look askance at the bribery among Ceylonese subordinates was a European viewpoint, etc. On the other hand, one got the impression of conservatism and orthodoxy on many other points.

It should be added that he admitted thatmany of the points he is making were the views of a man looking back and were very far from his thoughts when a young Conservator of Forests in Ceylon in the 1920's - hence his title "Hindsight on Ceylon".

M.W. Roberts
10.1.66

Hindsight on Ceylon 1921-1934

a paper written by Mr. H.C. King in January 1966.

Hugh Christopher King b. 8 June 1899
B.A. Oxon
1920 -1932(?) Forest Department, Ceylon
largely as an Assistant Conservator
of Forests.
Subsequently served in Mauritius and Sierra
Leone.

My main impression of Ceylon in that epoch was of an administration tolerant, aloof, and modestly progressive. While the administrators were well endowed intellectually and ready to apply their classics, Law and history to the languages and customs of the natives, they were not equipped to promote agriculture, external trade, mineral development, or manufacture in any form; for this reason it was perhaps wise that they should not have the direct control of the technical officers though this would have been a logical pattern. A good deal of wasted effort, and of resentment on the part of the Ceylonese, could have been avoided if administrative and technical officers had been required to study a condensed syllabus to cover the ethnology, religion, climate and trade of the territories they were to control. Much could have been done in a 4-6 months course, though suitable textbooks were few. If there was friction between the Visitors and the Home team it could have been reduced if communication had been better and if a Scottish immigrant had been trained to compare the somewhat bloodthirsty history of Kandyan feudal past with some of the more murky tales of Highland glens in the eighteenth century. This failure to communicate, the slow exchange of East West prejudices, left the land-owning classes rather isolated on their estates, unwilling to share in commerce or rural development. Indirect rule had the advantage of cheapness and convenience, the glamour of the Chief Headmans ancestry was tarnished by the drab succession of mainly unpaid local administrative duties, land settlement, bridle paths, and rest houses. The hierarchy of two or three grades of minor headmen was used to apply modern ideas of provincial control and while there were delays and cases of injustice, there was a widespread conviction that if the underdog could bring his complaints to the G.A. he did eventually get redress.

Ceylon emerged into independence far better equipped for the future than most other territories, but the large surplus funds were quickly dispersed by politicians in no way qualified to handle them. Secondary education had reached an acceptable level and had been relatively widespread, but the exceptional abilities of the elite had been syphoned off into law and medicine. The Ceylon Budget had always been balanced, over a number of years and without wholly antagonising foreign capital it would have been possible to finance a wider extension of higher education especially in technology. I believe that even now there is no medical school attached to the University. Too much reliance was laid on Christian missions to found and maintain schools of every grade and it is interesting to speculate whether this led to a too limited curriculum, and to a reluctance on the part of non Christian parents to cooperate. It is perhaps more true of Ceylon than in some other countries thattalent remained often unrecognised; one could find a Tamil teamaker on an estate paid 80 rupees a month talking Sinhalese Tamil and English, keep accounts of some complexity, and playing a part in factory management.

British administration left the immigrant Tamil community in an anomalous condition which has deteriorated. Before the emergence of political Buddhism and the rancour of the dispute about the Tamil language, it was not foreseen, in fact it would never have been believed, that Tamil estate labourers resident for three generations could be classed as "stateless persons" with no right to vote or to elect their own representative. Mr. Kotelawela's book gives a selection of facts well calculated to obscure the issue. If assimilation is too slow or indeed negligible, one can only speculate whether part at least of the tea estate labour force could not have been settled on the land and given a permanent stake in the country. It would have been a difficult, slow, and costly and politically unpopular programme but it is conceivable that say 2% of some estates, or a tract of irrigable land in the Eastern province might have been developed as a settlement for a Tamil nucleus. The psychological effect of this gesture would be considerable but it would be hard to find qualified leaders for the community: the wealthy Rettiar labour boss had no reputation (30 years ago) as a philanthropic disseminator of new ideas. It is not strange that Sinhalese show little aptitude for working through the monsoon on tea estates at high altitudes, protected only by a blanket from driving mist and rain; the paternalistic rule of European planters ensured solid quarters, rice at fair rates, medical care, and a smattering of primary education but no vestige of a permanent stake in the industry.

Personal recollections, carefully censored, are mixed. Visual impressions of Kandy lake at night, the wild bare hills of Walapane are unforgetable and so is the view from Hputale. Journeys off the main roads left vivid pictures of pale green paddy, white dagobas, mango cocoanuts and banana, and in this setting a junior official would be hospitably entertained however unwelcome might be the object of his visit. I remember no less a host of Government employees poorly paid, seldom well housed, often overloaded with permits and restrictions which almost defied fulfilment. It was of course the recognised custom of indigenous rule that an official of any grade except the highest should be rewarded in cash or kind by the petitioner, but it was perhaps too readily assumed by overseas staff that intelligent and trained subordinates were incapable of disinterested service. In 1933(?)5 or 6 of the best Forest Rangers were sent to Coimbatore for training, gained satisfactory reports and proved useful exponents of the art.

Information provided by Mr. H.C. King during an unrecorded interview, 8 Januray 1966.

Mr. King had not agreed to a tape-recorder but had the kindness to write out and type some of his views on affairs in Ceylon and these I read before the interview. In addition there were some questions I had sent beforehand at his request on which he had scrawled a few notes.

With regard to a point implied in the first para of his typescript he agreed that the European Civil Servants were rather aloof from the people. As far as I remember, he did not give a cogent answer to my query whether this degenerated into arrogance at times.

His reference to the lack of practical bent among the C.C.S. proper and the need for training of this sort seems to lie side by side with the view that the technical officers in each district should be under the G.A. and not directly under the heads of their departments. I am afraid I failed to question him as to its practicality.

I am afraid that I cannot recall many of the points discussed during the interview - an interview which followed that with Mr. Lucette. However the general impression I have is of a rather amorphous and imprecise collection of views. This is even reflected in his notes on my questions which I table now for the sake of its information.

The first four questions asked for the aims, and problems of and obstacles faced by the Forest Department. He said he could not give a detailed answer on these questions. This is a surprising answer from a Conservator of Forests even if we give allowance for subsequent service in Sierra Leone and Mauritius. Further questioning brought little more explanation than that there was need to protect the forests and the timber which was useful for domestic purposes as well as commercial value. Even the written query about comparison between policy and problems in Ceylon on the one hand and Sierra Leone on the other hand brought little beyond the view that there was no comparison. Questions 6,7, and 8 had been as follows:

6. Govt. policy regards chenaing in the N.C.P. has been severely criticised for being harsh and unimaginative - e.g. Freeman and Woolf. (a) Is it not correct to say that it was largely a sea of old chena and contained very little timber? (b) the existing timber was of little commercial value? (c) any comments on the criticism?
7. What sort of man was Freeman?
8. I quote from Dr. E.R. Leach's socio-anthropological study of

"Pul Eliya" (1961, Camb.) for comment

> ... it is still the case that large sections of the total map area are officially treated as reserved forest and controlled by the Govt. Forest Dept. It is impossible for any villager to*fell any useful type of timber tree without either infringing a government regulation or spending futile weeks in endeavours to obtain a felling licence.
>
> If any villager is seen to be putting up a new building of any kind, it is almost certain that he has committed some technical offence to obtain the timber. I need not go into details. It will suffice to say that the forest regulations are a constant source of grievance to the villager and a standing source of illicit income to the Forest Rangers. The passing of anonymous reports to the Forest Office is a widely practised form of spiteful behaviour between near neighbours.

His answer was:

6,7,8 A problem which defied cheap or easy solution, compounded of (1) need for protection (2) demand for produce (3) low salaries of controlling staff.

* I am much surprised there was any left in 1961.

Similarly he was singularly unforthcoming on the question of chenaing in the Dry Zone. To the question "Was there ever any danger of the Dry Zone forests becoming a dust bowl as a result of chenaing?", he said, "No - lantana"; i.e there arose a growth of lantana which prevented that. Dust bowls arose in some other parts of the world but could not be an outcome of shiftingcultivation in Ceylon. I cannot recall some of his answers to further queries on the chena question except that it was very indefinite and useless. Indeed, I think his inclination was to refer me to the short note he had jotted down, which has been reproduced above.

Questions on the headman system did not elicit much, but, here, I am afraid my memory is weak. I think he felt that the system was not too bad though the headmen had a great deal piled on their shoulders.

He thought that the education imparted by the missionary schools was not aligned to the needs of the country.

He was not willing to express views on relations between the C.C.S. and other public servants, nor, I think, to say much on personnel.

He had a high regard for D.S. Senanayake but thought that his unreasonableness on some matters had meant the loss of several good men - like Cameron, the vet, and Wilson and Kennedy of the Irrigation Department.

To the question "Any second hand knowledge of the work of the Survey Dept.? Any criticisms" he had written: "Most efficient".

To the question "Did British rule (i.e. pre 1931) lack purpose and drive? Was efficiency sought as an end in itself?" he wrote "see my para (1)" - another example of a largely irrelevant answer; indeed he seems to have missed the point here.

Lucette, he considered, a man of "real humility"and ability, Maybin "an excellent officer". He considered Newnham far abler than Wodeman, whom he did not like. I think he agreed that Wodeman was pompous.

M.W. Roberts
10.1.66

Mr. J. Kitching's Answers to Questions forwarded by M.W. Roberts, January and February 1966.

John Kitching, M.B.E. b. 30 July 1900
B. Sc. Edinburgh
1929 - 1947(?) Irrigation Dept., Ceylon
Subsequently served in Nigeria

1. What were the chief aims of the Irrigation Department in the 1930's and 1940's?

Answer:

During the 1930's and 1940's the main objective of the Irrigation Department was maximum increase of the land available for peasant farming. To attain this objective the work undertaken involved the construction or development of various types of scheme; including storage dams in the dry zone, barrages on perennial streams, flood protection works in river valleys, land drainage projects, and projects for the exclusion of salt water in coastal areas. In all cases the basic problem was the same; potential farm land existed but could not be cultivated either because of prolonged periods of drought, or on account of river flooding, or because of waterlogged soil.

2. How do the problems and aims in Ceylon compare with those in Nigeria?

Answer:

In Ceylon, irrigation from storage reservoirs has been practised for maybe a thousand years. Flood protection, with or without drainage, dates back at least to the time of the Dutch. In comparison the whole thing in Nigeria is new. There thus exists no basis for comparison between the two countries; and when I went to Nigeria in 1949 the primary objective was to set up an organisation capable of getting results.

3. What were the obstacles faced in implementing policy? Were there similar obstacles in Nigeria?

Answer:

Apathy on the part of peasant cultivators proved an obstacle to progress in Ceylon, and early experience indicated a similar situation in Nigeria. Villagers would be apt to accept what was offered to them free, but saw no reason why they themselves should make any effort: in particular, maintenance work on dams or channels was avoided almost as a matter of course. There were however exceptions to this attitude.

4. Can you pinpoint any shortcomings in policy and in method as far as the Irrigation Department's work in Ceylon was concerned.

Answer:

Ceylon irrigation policy was determined by D.S. Senanayake in consultation with the directorate of the Irrigation Department. It is hypothetical now to conjecture whether their policy could have been bettered. As regards method, mechanisation had been introduced by the mid-1930's, but the outbreak of war put a halt to it. Not only were new machines then unobtainable, but spare parts became so scarce that the available tractors etc. often had to lie idle.

5. What sort of success did the Department have in fulfilling its aims?

Answer:

It is difficult to find a yardstick for success. If at the time a graph had been prepared indicating the increase year by year of cultivable land due to work carried out by the Irrigation Department, and taking into consideration the technical staff available as also the cost; an opinion could have been formed. But no such calculation was ever made as far as I am aware.

6. It would seem that in the late 1920's and early 30's the Irrigation Department was rent by rivalries and that obstructionism prevailed at the centre. Is this correct? If so, I would appreciate elaboration.

7. How did you find D.S. Senanayake as a Minister? Did he have some bees in his bonnet? Was he difficult to get on with? Would it be correct to say that he drove some good men away?

Answer to 6 and 7:

D.S. Senanayake was undoubtedly the outstanding Minister of the 1930's and 1940's. He was vitally interested in the Irrigation Department as being the main contributary [sic] factor to his policy for a steady increase in peasant farming. He therefore saw to it that there was no hold up caused by shortage of funds; and his expressed policy was that the amount of work undertaken by the Department was to be limited only by the capacity of the available technical staff. Unfortunately he completely failed to understand that the Department was not a machine whose component parts were replaceable. Under this misapprehension he proceeded to force or accept the resignation of a number of the most experienced members of the Department in order that he himself should have complete control. During the period 1938 to 1940 in particular, the Director and Deputy Director were got rid of; and the next two senior men resigned. These top grade technicians over a period of years had acquired a very great knowledge of Ceylon conditions, and in effect were irreplaceable.

As regard recruitment to the Department, when I joined in 1929 there were not I think any qualified Ceylon engineers available. The policy vis-a-vis expatriate engineers at that time appeared to be to sack 50% at the end of their three year period of probation, in order to ensure a high standard of performance. At a later date no such selectivity was possible. In fact by the mid-1940's a search had to be made by the Ceylon government for engineers in India, Canada, Italy, etc. to replace the experienced men who either had been driven away or had retired in the normal course of age. At no time while I was in Ceylon did the Irrigation Department appear to be attractive to Ceylonese engineers: perhaps because the work often involved a lonely life in malarial jungles.

D.S. Senanayake on the occasions I met him, I found to be quite easy to get on with. As a 100% Ceylonese patriot however I have little doubt that he regarded heads of departments of any nationality and their staffs as being not so much human beings with the ordinary rights of human beings, as bits of mechanism he could throw away when he had done with them.

8. Did you feel that many of the new Ceylonese Ministries rushed into various schemes of development without weighing the pros and cons?

Answer:

The Ministers of the 1930's gave the impression of being very much wrapped up in politics. At Provincial Agricultural meetings I attended at which irrigation programmes were on the agenda; those present, whether Ministers, State Councillors, or others, rarely discussed the merits of a project. The sole objective seemed to be to grab projects for their particular constituency or sphere of influence.

9. What did you think of the competence and effectiveness of vel vidanes in maintaining village tanks and irrigation channels?

10. Any comments on the village headman system, its usefulness and/or shortcomings?

Answer to 9 and 10:

The effectiveness of vel vidanes and other village headman was I think already declining by the start of the 1930's. These men were usually appointed by Government Agents, who became of decreasing importance with the introduction of the Donoughmore Constitution. As the authority of the Government Agent declined, so did that of the village headman. In particular vel vidanes would find it increasingly difficult to get peasants to do any annual maintenance work on village dams or irrigation channels.

11. Did you find it difficult to establish a rapport with the peasantry? Were they responsive to your demands and to the regulations?
12. Did you feel or know if there was much agricultural indebtedness?
13. In the Up-country areas and the Low-country rubber and coconut areas was there a class of Ceylonese who could be called land brokers? Did these men, Ceylonese planters and speculators, and European planters and speculators tend to buy up village land that was held on dubious title?
14. What do you think of the Brayne-inspired scheme of tenure - i.e. indivisible leasehold? Do you think it was practicable?

Answer to 11,12,13 and 14:

The increasing demands made by D.S. Senanayake on the engineers of the Irrigation Department necessarily involved a re-orientation of policy. Throughout each year maximum effort had now to be put into the investigation, design and construction of projects of one type or another. At the same time there had occurred, as in other countries, much additional office work, involving routine reports and returns of many descriptions. It followed that something had to go by the board, and a casualty was undoubtedly contact between the Irrigation Engineer and the peasant farmer. There just was not time available, and any man who attempted it would have found himself in the position that whatever he was doing he ought to be doing something else. To be effective then, in the 1930's and 1940's the Irrigation Engineer had increasingly to concentrate on purely technical work, while giving grudging attention to the ever increasing office routine with which he was compelled to deal.

15. As D.I.E., Land Development from 1943-46 what were your principal tasks and how did they work out?

Answer:

As D.I.E. Land Development, my task was to convert virgin jungle into farmland at a target rate of 10 acres a day; at the same time constructing colonists' houses at a rate of 60 a month.

All materials for the houses had to be improvised in the jungle. For the jungle felling operation there were very few machines available; and still fewer for uprooting stumps. In some areas big trees averaged 70 an acre, so that the programme in effect called for felling, burning and uprooting of up to 700 trees a day, and subsequently preparing the cleared land for cultivation at a rate of 10 acres a day.

For the housing programme it was possible to improvise kilns for the production of somewhat inferior bricks, and also lime kilns for the manufacture of mortar. But sawmills set up in the jungle could not work satisfactorily because of the lack of saws. Nails or screws were unobtainable, so that the roof timbers of houses had to be bound together with coir rope. The resultant colonist house was a brick bungalow with a cadjan roof. It was necessarily a makeshift affair, but a considerable improvement on D.S. Senanayake's original concept of a mud edifice costing Rs. 300.

As far as I remember the maximum output attained in a month was about 25% of the target; and in retrospect I cannot imagine how we did even that, for the target was linked more to wishful thinking than to any sort of reality.

16. How would you appraise the different heads of Department under whom you served?

Answer:

J.S. Kennedy was the one outstanding man. Before my time he had originated the conception of a scientific approach to village irrigation projects; and much of what I was able to do subsequently derived from his earlier work. Subsequently as Head of the Department he set up in Colombo a hydraulic laboratory for model experiments. He also propounded the basic ideas for the Gal Oya project, a major scheme on the Walawe Ganga, and other major projects through the Island.

I have no comment to make on the other Directors under whom I served, except to remark that J.H. Wilson had little chance to show what he could do before he too was manoeuvred out of office within a year or so of succeeding Kennedy.

17. What are your impressions and opinions on the Ceylon Public Service as a whole? ... and within it, on the C.C.S.?

Answer:

Latterly I found working in Ceylon quite unpleasant. In contrast Nigeria proved agreable[sic]. For example it was assumed in Nigeria that every man was doing his job to the best of his ability, and most men did in fact do so. By the late 1940's a quite usual mode of address in Ceylon seemed to be to call for an individual's explanation why he had or had not followed a certain course of action.

From the introduction of the Donoughmore Constitution onwards, the C.C.S. undoubtedly suffered from diminishing authority, and perhaps diminishing usefulness as a consequence.

18. How was liaison in the field between Irrigation Officers and the district officials (A.G.A's and G.A.'s, etc.) in your experience? ... generally?
19. Did you find that most G.A.'s and A.G.A.'s were impractical when it came to agricultural matters?

Answer to 18 and 19:
In my experience G.A.'s and A.G.A.'s were usually willing to assist Irrigation personnel in any way they could. They appeared to have no great knowledge of agricultural matters, and they did not pretend to such knowledge.

20. Did you find that C.C.S. men tended to live up to the phrase "heaven born"; i.e., were they snobbish towards other Public Servants even in your day?

Answer:
A few C.C.S. men gave the impression of regarding themselves as heaven born. But they were in the minority, and of this minority some at least may have adopted a pompous attitude as a cloak to cover shyness.

A long standing government publication at that time referred to "Gentlemen of the Civil Service and Officers of other Departments". This gave rise to the quip that Ceylon was the only country in the world where it was impossible to be an officer and a gentleman ... Other official publications of the same type may well have given rise to the "heaven born" legend.

21. Were you personally subject to criticism in Press or Council or faced with political interference of an objectionable kind in the 1930's? Do you know if other Public Servants suffered from such criticism or interference? If so, was it resented?

Answer:
I personally was not subjected to criticism in Press or Council, and I cannot recall it having being experienced by any particular individual. But cases did occur.

22. What did you think (then) and what do you think now of the rather novel Constitution set up under the Donoughmore recommendations, particularly the grant of universal franchise?

Answer:

By using hindsight, I have no doubt that limited electoral franchise rather than universal should have been the basis of the Donoughmore Constitution. Also that in the first place the Constitution should have been introduced for a set period of years, after which the whole matter would come up for reconsideration and if necessary amendment. The Constitution was after all an innovation (sometimes I believe referred to as "The Ceylon Experiment"); and for an experiment to run for just on twenty years without modification is surely excessive?

At the time the Donoughmore Constitution was introduced I had only recently arrived in Ceylon, and I had little idea what it was all about.

23. Any comments on the Executive Committee system?

Answer:

No comment.

24. Did European Public Servants resent the State Council's refusal to grant them passage allowances, etc.?

Answer:

At the start European Public Servants did resent the State Council attitude towards passage allowances. But they got used to it when it went on year after year.

25. Can you recollect the Bracegirdle affair? Why was he deported? Was he a serious threat to Government?

Answer:

The Bracegirdle affair rather gave the impression of being a political stunt. I doubt if he ever was a serious threat to anyone, but he was a godsend to the newspapers.

26. How would you appraise the following as men and Governors: Sir H. Stanley, Sir G. Thomson, Sir R.E. Stubbs, Sir A. Caldecott, Sir H.M. Moore?

Answer:

I met these Governors only on formal occasions. To the generality of Public Servants of the 1930's and 1940's, Governors were not of great interest; in fact were not held in any particular regard.

27. ... and the following: Sir F.G. Tyrrell, Sir ? Bourdillon, Sir M.M. Wedderburn, Wilfred Woods, Sir S. Phillipson, Sir R. Drayton, R.H. Bassett, C.V. Brayne, the two Balfours, Ingledow, De Glanville, R.M.M. Worsley, H.W. Codrington, Jones-Bateman.

Answer:
I recall Wedderburn as being an able man, as also Basset[sic]; and Ingledow as being pleasant to meet. Of the others I have no particular recollection.

28. I would also appreciate your assessment of any politicians you saw or knew sufficiently well to comment on.

Answer:
D.S. Senanayake. Jungle John, a bull of a man. It was said that when opposed he would bellow, put down his horns and charge. Personally I liked him; and I believe he put up with me because I got results, but considered me to be too independant.
S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike. At Provincial Agricultural meetings in Colombo in the 1930's he would begin to speak softly, and finally almost scream in order to persuade the meeting that all irrigation projects under consideration for the ensuing year should be located in his constituency.

29. What is your opinion on the nature and tone of the Ceylonese-run English language newspapers?

Answer:
It is a long time since I have seen any Ceylon newspapers.

30. Did the Irrigation Department suffer greatly from political meddling in appointments in the 1930's? I would appreciate some elaboration and some examples if possible.

Answer:
In so far as the Directorate of the Irrigation Department is concerned, I have discussed political interference in paras 6 and 7. As regards the appointment of new Irrigation Engineers, D.S. Senanayake decreed in the early 1930's that no further expatriates would be appointed to the permanent establishment. There were at that time five or six European Engineers on probation. After very considerable wrangling and delay two of them, including myself, were eventually offered permanent

appointment. The other three or four men then left Ceylon.

31. Could you comment on the nature and success of Senanayake's colonisation schemes?

Answer:

The colonisation schemes tended to be conceived in comfortable surroundings in Colombo, with rosy pictures of a contended[sic] peasantry leading a happy life in a smiling countryside. The reality might well prove to be very different, with families uprooted from towns living miserably in unaccustomed conditions; appaled[sic] by the strenous[sic] efforts required to make jungle land viable, and quite unable to face up to that prospect. There was also undoubtedly underestimation both as to the technical resources required to convert jungle into farm land on a large scale, and also the cost of such an undertaking. But the main factor to which insufficient consideration was given was I believe the influence of the jungle itself. This affected not only the colonists but the staff and the labour force of the various government departments who were endevouring[sic] to get results. Malaria in many areas was rife. Bulldozers and other necessary machines were scarce and breakdowns in the 1940's were frequent. Spare parts were in such short supply that it was by no means unknown for a project to have two thirds of its inadequate machines out of action. At times the departmental personnel concerned must inevitably have felt that they were fighting a losing battle, when they saw how fast the jungle crept back over cleared land which newly arrived colonists had not the heart to keep under control.

It should be stressed that underestimation of the resources required for a successful battle with Nature was not confined to Ceylon. Another example on a larger scale is the Ground Nuts Scheme undertaken during the latter part of the 1940's in East Africa. This project was abandoned after three or four years when it was found that the planned developement[sic] was not feasible, because the entire available technical resources were inadequate to keep the already cleared land from reverting to bush.

32. I would also like your comments on any of the large-scale irrigation projects in your time with which you are familiar.

Answer:

In an executive capacity I was concerned chiefly with village irrigation projects, having designed and supervised the construction of some two hundred schemes. At that time the existing Major Works (i.e. Government maintained projects) were mostly of long standing, of the size range 1000 to 30,000 acres; and offering little scope for large scale expansion. One or two Major Works were in process of development, but progress had been held up by the war. By the time I left Ceylon, construction was in hand for several new schemes, and various new projects were under discussion.

33. In what way could land policy have been better adapted to assist the peasantry? ... and capitalists?

Answer:

Please see paras 11 to 14. For the greater part of my service my energies were devoted to technical work involved in the investigation, design and construction of the various types of water control projects enumerated in para 1. Land policy did not come within that orbit.

34. Did the British judicial system conduce towards the prostitution of justice and even be said to have brought law rather than justice?

Answer:

You would need a computer and a jury of angels to settle that question.

Replies to Further Queries, 2 February 1966.

35. With reference to your answer to questions 6 and 7 would you tell me what methods he used to get rid of Kennedy and Wilson. I know he was Minister but presumably it was not possible for him to sack them off-hand. Am I correct in inferring that "the next two senior men" who resigned at this stage, resigned because of these acts and the treatment they were receiving themselves?

As far as I know Kennedy was D.S's man in that D.S. had backed his appointment, etc. Also in extenuation of D.S's action in getting rid of him, could it not be said that Kennedy by then (1938) was far too alcoholic. Indeed another Civil Servant felt that D.S. put up with him for so long simply because he was so outstanding that men tolerated a great deal from him. Also he adds that he heard that Kennedy "unloaded far too much on him" (i.e. D.S.). Is this correct? But this Civil Servant also feels that Kennedy was "let down badly in the end".

Answer:

I was on leave in England when Kennedy was actually got rid of. The accepted story when I returned to Ceylon was that D.S.S. had made his life such a misery that he eventually appealed to the Governor for assistance; and was told in reply, "If you cannot get on with your Minister, you had better resign".

Wilson was Kennedy's Deputy and stepped up as Acting Director when Kennedy left. Within a year or so D.S.S. and Wilson were at loggerheads. In a final clash, Wilson demanded that D.S.S. should desist from giving orders to I.D. engineers over his (Wilson's) head; while D.S.S. demanded a definite date for Wilson to finalise a report on a scheme that had been suggested. A deadlock ensued. D.S.S. then sent for S.G. Taylor who was acting as Deputy of Irrigation, and offered him Wilson's job. Taylor, a much junior man to Wilson, accepted with the proviso that the appointment should be immediate and substantiative. Wilson thus found himself having to take orders from his own subordinate, and had no alternative but to resign. It was an effective manouevre, but not conducive to good relations within the Irrigation Department.

The next two senior men in the I.D. saw the red light and got out shortly after Kennedy's demise. As far as I am aware it was a precautionary measure and not because they themselves had as yet got embroiled.

Kennedy was I believe D.S.S's appointee to the D.I's post. After four or five years however Senanayake may have considered he had nothing more to learn from Kennedy. In which case a less strong personality might well suit D.S.S. better; and his subsequent treatment of Wilson does rather suggest that he was looking for a yes-man as D.I. Kennedy's alcoholism must have been a factor in the situation, but whether it was much more than a contributary lever to help get him out, I do not know.

I am a little puzzled by the suggestion that Kennedy "unloaded too much on D.S.S."; unless it is that Kennedy had such an active mind and so few interests outside of his work that he could be exhausting to be with.

36. Obviously D.S. was responsible for the visionary targets set for you and Govt. under the Land Development crash-programme in the War Years. But were Layton and the Secretariat also party to these unrealistic hopes? I suspect that the demands of war were such that they (D.S. and Layton and Secretariat) were inclined to have optimistic expectations simply because the need was great?

Answer:

The war must have seemed to Senanayake an opportunity to push ahead with his colonisation schemes. Layton would hardly question any scheme claiming at ministerial level to be aimed at the production of more food; and who in the Secretariat would be likely to point out that an attempt to create in various localities small holdings each with a house on it was perhaps not the best way to bump up Ceylon's food supply rapidly?

37. I am certain that many Ceylonese did not show an inclination to take to an engineering life in the jungles, but I wonder whether the previous British Administration could not have done something to fight this by providing better salaries, etc. and forcing (as far as possible) as high a status on engineers as on doctors and lawyers?

Also in this connection, wasn't the education system far too aligned to white-collar work and inadequately technological?

Answer:

Increased salaries for Irrigation Engineers would I am afraid have caused a great outcry from other departments. Already the I.D. had bigger annual increments, free housing and slightly better pension terms. The avoidance by Ceylonese engineers of employment in the I.D. was after all quite sensible. To make a comparison:- What qualified young Britishers would choose to work in an isolated part of say Scotland in which malaria was known to be rampant? The same argument applies to Ceylonese in Ceylon. In both instances other opportunities would be sought. (And please see P.S.) Education on a more technological basis would I am sure have been much preferable, but for Ceylon to have adopted such a policy in the 1920's would have put it a quarter of a century ahead of most other countries.

Engineers in general rather lost status vis-a-vis lawyers and doctors in the latter half of the 19th century by failing to restrict the use of the word "engineer" to professional men. In consequence the term came to include such men as locomotive drivers and even artizans working in heavy industry.

I think it would have been quite extraordinary for Ceylon in the 1920's to have adopted an attitude towards education and professional status which differed materially from the rest of the world. To do so would have required an almost clairvoyant pioneer, endowed with tremendous persuasiveness and with overriding authority.

P.S. The availability of expatriates from the U.K. in the 1920's for service in Ceylon jungles was due I think to an urge at that time to get out into the wilds(bush, jungle pampas, etc.), right away from one's own country. There was no shortage of jobs for young men at that time, and no one had thought of the Depression which hit the world about 1930.

Comments on Interview with Mr. J.H.L. Leigh-Clare, M.C., 14 January, 1966.

A genial classicist Mr. Leigh-Clare was not greatly inhibited by the presence of a tape-recorder though somewhat guarded on points. His memory was not vivid on many points but he did his best to help.

I suspect that he was the hearty type of official who was not politically-minded and rather blithely and casually saw to his daily chores. Ability, average I should think. Indeed, from the fact that he was never a G.A. and was removed from the Chairmanship of the Port Commission by Layton it would seem that even this was questioned by some of his superiors. He was by no means a dim-wit however. He had firm opinions on several points I raised which could, perhaps, be classed as out of the ordinary (the Civil Servants' "ordinary"). He was liberal enough to agree with criticisms to the effect of aloofness and arrogance. His views on the question of excluding Ceylonese from G.A.ships were coloured by the fact that he was never a G.A. He was certainly willing to be critical of Government as well as individuals. How far all this was retrospective and, in some instances, the consequence of mellowed views, I hesitate to say.

On the questionable theory that an average man cannot be a good judge of either men ~~and~~ or outstanding ability, one can question his assessment of individuals.

M.W. Roberts
16.1.66

P.S. Among his unrecorded comments: He made the point that Sir John Kotelawela "destroyed" the U.N.P. Also stated that Worsley followed Sandys as A.G.A., Matara and had "to clean the Augean stables".

Mr. W.M. McNeill's Answers to Questions forwarded by M.W.Roberts, 9 February, 1966.

William Martin McNeill, M.B.E.
b. 9 Jan. 1900
M.A. Oxon.
1922? - 1938's? Forest Dept., Ceylon
1931 for a short period was Aide-de-Camp to the Acting Governor
1932-34 was on a scholarship in U.S.A.

Extracts from letter to M.W.Roberts, 9.2.66

I am sending you herewith some brief answers to most of your questions. Several of the questions are very searching and would take a long time to answer fully. I have refrained from commenting on personalities even though they may now be dead.

....

Many of the events and happenings you refer to took place a good many years ago. My general memory of my time in Ceylon is a tremendously happy one - especially my time in the jungle. The latter years when politics played a larger part were not so pleasant.

1. What were the chief aims and principles in Forest Conservation in the 1920's? in the 1930's?

Answer:
The best division of forest history into periods is that followed by H.G. Champion (Sessional Paper VII - 1935) viz:- (i) Prior to 1882. (ii) 1822-1900. (iii) 1900-1919 (iv) 1920-1932 (v) 1932-1935.
Period 1920-1932 dealt with by P.M. Lushington in his Report (1921). Main aim to use existing Forest Reserves for purpose of making Ceylon self sufficient regarding timber requirements. Period 1932-1935. Main aim the revision of all Forest Reservation within the context of a larger Land Policy to achieve self sufficiency in timber but with concentration on the establishment of plantations.

2. Was there any change in either aim or emphasis in 1930-31 with the Donoughmore Constitution and D.S. Senanayake?

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Answer:

See 1 above. More a change of emphasis than of aim. Forestry to be considered along with other land use and consequent revision of boundaries of Forest Reserves and general pressure in favour of more land for agriculture.

3. What were the chief obstacles faced in implementing these aims, during the 1920's and 1930's, (a) in the Dry Zone? (b) in the Wet Zone?

Answer:

In both Dry and Wet Zones chief obstacles:-
(a) Lack of complete fresh inventories, stock maps, etc.
(b) Lack of cultural(?) knowledge.
(c) Lack of specially qualified senior staff.
In Dry Zone special difficulties regarding chena cultivation.
In Wet Zone special difficulties regarding utilization of so called 'inferior' tree species.

4. Did the problems and the needs in Ceylon have any analogy in any country with which you are familiar, first-hand or second-hand?

Answer:

Yes. Problems similar in all Tropical countries where shifting cultivation, land hunger and reservation of Forest Land by Ordinance.

5. Was there ever any danger of the Dry Zone ending up as a dust-bowl as a result of chenaing?

Answer:

Unrestricted chena inevitably results in gradual impoverishment of the site and ultimate sterility. 'Dustbowl' conditions ultimately possible but progress gradual and dangers exaggerated.

6. I quote from Dr.E.R. Leach's socio-anthropological study of "Pul Eliya, A Village in Ceylon" (1961, Camb.) for comment ; i.e. I will like you to verify and otherwise comment on each sentence and point re applicability in your time.

" ... it is still the case that large sections of the total map area are officially treated as reserved forest and controlled by the Govt. Forest Dept. It is impossible for any villager to fell any useful type of timber tree without either infringing a government regulation or spending futile weeks in endeavours to obtain a felling licence.

If any villager is seen to be putting up a new building of any kind, it is almost certain that he has committed some technical offence to obtain the timber. I need not go into details. It will suffice to say that the forest regulations are a constant source of grievance to the villager and a standing source of illicit income to the Forest Rangers. The passing of anonymous reports to the Forest Office is a widely practised form of spiteful behaviour between near neighbours."

Answer:

Extracts such as these are rarely entirely right or wrong. In any country where there is a Forest Policy e.g. Gt. Britain, there must be considerable areas 'reserved' for forestry where activities by the 'natives' must be restricted. The inference here is that the areas are excessively large. I do not think so if the Policy is to be implemented. It is an exaggeration to say that theft and decay are inevitable. The Ordinance provides for 'Village Forests' to meet this need and there must be much land from which local timber requirements can be legitimately obtained. The best trees are most likely to be in the Reserves and of course the temptation to steal is very great.

It follows that the second sentence is not untrue but it suggests a bitterness which may be exaggerated. As a Forest Officer I had to deal with many cases of illicit felling. I also had many decent honest Forest Rangers. I can believe that things may not have improved since 1938 (when I retired from the Forest Dept.).

7. How was the liaison in the field between Conservators and A.G.A.'s and G.A.'s in the field within your personal experience as well as generally in your time?

Answer:

This naturally varied with individuals. Liaison was generally good, mostly very good.

8. Did you feel that the Civil Servants tended to be rather snooty both socially and administratively?

Answer:

No - this has been absurdly exaggerated, usually by other British residents who were envious or ill educated. Most Civil Servants were exceedingly fair, reasonable and highly respected by the local people.

9. Did you feel that there was a lack of receptivity to new ideas and a general obstructionism at central (Forest Dept.) head-quarters? and at the Secretariat during the 1920's?

Answer:
I think one must admit that in the 1920's the attitude was conservative and patriarchal but not hostile. The post war (1914-18) civil servants including Forest Officers were more reasonable than the older generation and many new ideas originated from them.

10. Did you consider that, in British times (i.e. pre 1931), there was a lack of drive, purpose and imagination in the way Ceylon was ruled? Was efficiency sought as an end in itself?

Answer:
Certainly not. Generally speaking the kind of man entering Government Service was well-bred and well educated. He was broadminded, disinterested and had the good of the people at heart. Efficiency was placed high but not as an end in itself.

11. Could you assess the abilities of the different departmental heads you served under?

Answer:
I could but I should prefer not to.

12. How would you appraise D.S. Senanayake?

Answer:
Probably genuinely sincere but obstinate, limited in his knowledge, prejudiced and on occasion very unreasonable.

13. What sort of man was H.R. Freeman? Would you comment on his criticisms of Government's anti-chenaing regulations and other aspects of Government administration in the N.C.P.?

Answer:
I always found Freeman a delightful and charming man and a completely dedicated civil servant thinking only of the local villager in the N.C.P. I did not however agree with him about chena.

14. What was your reaction to the grant of universal franchise and the other measures taken on the Donoughmore Commission's advice?

Answer:

This is a very big question. Briefly, I regarded universal franchise, etc. as too precipitate but ultimately desirable.

15. Did many public servants have misgivings? Did many regard the steps with some horror?

Answer:

Presumably this refers to the Donoughmore Report? Yes, most with grave misgivings, few with horror.

16. Did you personally suffer from any political criticism in Press or newspaper? Or from any interference of an irritating sort?

Answer:

(a) No. (b) Yes. Senanayake interfered with internal Departmental administration including personalities. He hated opposition.

17. Were any other Public Servants you knew subject to such criticism or interference? If so, was it greatly resented?

Answer:

(a) Yes. (b) Yes.

18. How would you assess the following (since deceased) as men and administrators: Sir H. Stanley, Sir G. Thomson, Sir F.G. Tyrrell, Sir R.E. Stubbs, Wilfred Woods, Sir M.M. Wedderburn, Sir A. Caldecott, H.W. Codrington, R.H. Bassett, E.B. Alexander, F. Huxham, Sir R. Drayton, W.K.H. Campbell, C.V. Brayne, Sir Bernard Bourdillon, Sir M. Fletcher.

Answer:

Some of these people I knew very well, some slightly and a few not at all. I should prefer not to comment.

19. Can you recollect the Bracegirdle affair? What sort of chap was Bracegirdle, as far as you know? Was he a serious threat in any way?

Answer:

I quite forget the details but my impression is that Bracegirdle was not a serious threat.

20. Have you any idea what the peasantry thought about the L.S.O and his work in the 1920's? in general?

Answer:

I am quite sure that the ordinary villager considered the Land Settlement Officer as a fair unbiased and considerate man genuinely concerned about the welfare of the local population.

21. What do you think of Brayne's scheme of indivisible leasehold? Was it impracticable from the administrative point of view?

Answer:

I do not know enough about it to express a useful opinion.

Comments on Interview with Mr. R.H.D. Manders, O.B.E., 6 January 1966.

Having been G.A., Galle in the 1950's the Manders knew my family well and could remember me, so the interview was characterised by considerable freedom though the many leading questions might well have made him wonder what to say. Somewhat conscious of the recorder at the outset, he soon relaxed. On the whole, I think he gave his frank opinion on most points. He was willing to provide critical views of Fletcher, Sir John, S.W.R.D. and Dudley. In any event, he did not strike me as a man who was given to sharp or extreme views on men or matters. A good mixer, easy-going, simple and unsophisticated I am certain Mr. Manders got on well with most Ceylonese, and even with the politicians. The fact that he remained till 1959 and was the last European Civil Servant also supports this appraisal.

By nature too Mr. Manders does not seem to have been given to concern himself much with political matters though not entirely uninterested and somewhat more interested than some others interviewed. By nature too I am certain Mr, Manders' thinking on these matters was highly conservative. I should also say that his friends in the Civil Service would have been the orthodox and conservative sorts rather then the radical and the imaginative. His criticism of Caldecott was very much the planters' criticism and here I feel, he was reflecting the consensus of thought in the C.C.S. and showing a lack of critical objectivity - i.e. he seems to have accepted the climate of European thought in which he lived in the 1930's and 1940's (he was largely in Matale).

I should think he was an officer who moved in the fixed grooves seeing to day to day problems and giving very limited attention to possibilities of radical improvement or thinking in terms of alternatives. His outlook on the questions pertaining to the British judicial system and answer to the query "Did the British bring law rather than justice?" highlight this characteristic. On the other hand he did show an awareness of the bribery that moved underneath as well as some perception on a couple of points: e.g. that the rural marketing and co-operative movements were not the panaceas that some thought they would be.

I think his answers will probably seem rather imprecise and vague at times but in view of my own failings in this regard I am hardly the one to complain.

M.W. Roberts
6.1.66

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Comments on Interview with Mr. R.M.G. Monypenny, 9 January, 1966.

A graduate in Modern Languages who had begun his University course in Cambridge as a student of History and Modern Languages, Mr. Monypenny is a small man without the aggressiveness often associated with such a build. Complete unflappability and mild manneredness can be considered his hallmarks as, indeed, reflected in his lazy drawl. A very good example to illustrate the phrase, 'cool, calm and collected'. What was more, I should think that he was a good mixer and a very adaptable and homely type - features which can also be attributed to Mrs. Monypenny. There would have been little of arrogance and superiority in this couple. The very fact that they remained to be one of the last European Civil Service couples is proof of their adaptability and their easy-going nature,

These characteristics were mixed with a good deal of ability and perception. A quiet worker, I should think, but not one who was bound by orthodoxy or fixed grooves. He was unworried by the Donoughmore changes. While not intensively interested in political matters he does not seem to have been wholly oblivious to them. Not enamoured of universal franchise, he was willing to see the other side of the coin and on many questions his views were fairly liberal.

Hardly worried by the tape-recorder. Such was his equanimity that he calmly allowed himself to be subjected to the questions and was ready to help me with candid views. Opinions on personalities are always a good barometer regarding the degree of cautiousness in answers and I am certain his answers on this point would indicate much candidness, besides being a pretty good appraisal of the men concerned. On the whole, his views were very fair; not being a man with strong likes and dislikes, his views on individuals will also have the merit of a very limited bias.

I should add that his two sons are still planters in Ceylon.

M.W. Roberts
9.1.66

Unrecorded Information provided by Mr. R.M.G. Monypenny, 9 January 1966.

Newnham was a man who was 'very clever' but because of his 'waspish tongue' did not go down well with his superiors.

Wodeman was not as clever and rather 'stodgy.'

After 1956, as Permanent Secretary to Ilangaratne's Ministry, Monypenny found himself being interfered with more and more. Though he had a year to go before the retiring age he decided to retire in 1959 before he found himself in the soup. He clearly did not agree with some of Ilangaratne's methods. E.g. Once Ilangaratne sent a peremptory order to dismiss a certain headman. It took Monypenny some time to persuade him that neither he nor Monypenny had the power to do so.

M.W. Roberts
9/1/66

There was a greater sense of purpose and direction in Independent Ceylon than during 'Donoughmore Ceylon' besides a greater flow of money. In the earlier period he felt that the politicians at times wasted their energies in anti-Government activities whereas at the time when they were at the helm they devoted these energies to better purpose.

Comments on Interview with Mr. R.B.Naish, 11.12.1965

Mr. Naish is 74 years old but had all his wits about him; he still keeps his mind pretty active interesting himself in archaeology, mediaeval history and the like. Obviously he could not remember many things but stated this immediately when I asked such questions; did not feel that I was straining his memory as I did in some cases: e.g. Mr. E.T.Dyson,or Mr. Sandys.

The fact that I was having the interview for historical purposes and recording it was always in his mind. Terse and brief by nature, I should think, this knowledge made him wary. He was giving nothing away. This does not mean that he was a stuffy old bird. On the contrary, he was a kind-hearted gentleman who spotted leading questions and, with a twinkle in his eye, refused to be drawn and say anything sharply critical or outrageous. This means that where his opinion was critical, it was, in fact, reasonable criticism (on a point which he felt he could fairly criticise without hurting anyone). Thus his views on the impracticability of applying Brayne's tenures can be taken as a correct view particularly as it was based on actual experience in trying to administer it.

When it came to individuals he drew a rigid line at saying anything detrimental about anyone. When he had a poor opinion of anyone he said nothing. One of these was Sir Robert Drayton. Naish, apparently, had had several personal differences with him and because he felt he was biased against Drayton scrupulously refused to say anything about him. In its own way, however, this is relevant; andit is striking that G.L.D.Davidson also had differences with Drayton.

But where he thought men able, Naish willingly expressed an opinion. The question is : how good are his appraisals? It is remarkable that he thought very highly of Stanley - apart from what is on tape he said Stanley was 'as big a man as Clifford' and a man with a sincere kind-heartedness while in conversation with me. Since both Gimson and Davidson besides others (and   for instance) felt Stanley was a mediocrity and a nonentity, this is suprising. When there is such a clash whose opinion do we take? We can take it that Stanley had an ordinary amount of ability for Gimson etc. do not deny this , but was this all? My personal inclination would be to accept that of Gimson and Co. because they are men of greater drive than Mr. Naish.

Mr. Naish, I am fairly certain, was an efficient officer; by no means a dullard but I doubt if he had the drive, the enthusasm and the readiness to move out of fixed grooves that Brayne, Gimson etc. had. He was a type who would placidly and efficientl get on with his job while the political fires were burning around him. If Aristotle was searching for an archetype for his point that 'man is a political animal ' (to distort his view somewhat), Mr. Naish would drive him to frustration - he had a very limited interest in the political changes.

I should think Mr. Naish mixed quite well and in his genial way furthered peaceable race relations; little prejudice in him; by nature a man who did not indulge in sharp or extreme views.

M.W.Roberts
11.12.65

P.S.

Mr. Naish is a Quaker.

Unrecorded Information provided by Mr. R.E. Naish,
9 January 1966.

C.V. Brayne: 'always bubbling with ideas.'

P. Arunachalam: considered a nice gentlemanly sort.

G.G. Ponnambalam: seemed to think him agreeable.

S.W.R.D. Bandaranayake: 'even' in Naish's time he seemed 'to have a chip on his shoulder'; always seemed 'bitter' according to Mr. Naish, who could not understand why in view of the fact that Mr. B. was born with a silver spoon in his mouth. His switching over to Buddhism, etc. could also be regarded as showing opportunist tendencies.

Regarding racial segregation within the Civil Service Mr. Naish felt that the clubs in Kurunegala, Kalutara and Jaffna were mixed and relations with the educated Sinhalese extremely cordial. But he felt the charge of segregation applied to Colombo and Kandy.

To my point that arrogance was not a wise thing he said that arrogance was not a nice thing anywhere, that 'humility' was what was needed; he felt (after I alluded to signs of it in Bowes) that it was not so much arrogance but that that sort of thing - presumably racial intermixing - was simply not done. He added that Tyrrell was not of the same school as Bowes, had more liberal ideas and a number of friends among the Ceylonese. I think he was warning me that Bowes was not typical of his generation; i.e. Naish's generation; that Bowes was something out of the nineteenth century.

M.W. Roberts
9/1/66

Comments on Interview with Professor S.A. Pakeman, 11 February, 1966.

Professor Pakeman was not an administrator but being a European lecturer in Colombo from 1920 it was to be expected that he moved in administrative circles as well. Being a historian it was natural that he should take an interest in political matters. As far as the interview was concerned, it differed from those with Civil Servants in that Professor Pakeman did not feel himself a part of that body (though many of his best friends were Civil Servants). It is not surprising that he took a historical viewpoint and did his best to help. The question of guarded answers, therefore, hardly arises. Only just retired at a ripe old age, he was fully alive mentally and his memory quite vivid.

I do not have a high regard for his book written as it is for a European market. But I found him more critical of British rule than I expected; i.e. he was ready to see that the C.C.S. were too aloof and that there was arrogance, etc. He was discriminatory too in his appraisal of personnel and considered some men very average. However I am not certain how much reliance I would place on these appraisals. He certainly had a higher opinion of Southorn than I should think was warranted.

He tended to be expansive and this took up time. I do not think I handled or organised the interview very well. I left it with a vague feeling of disquiet. I think I made too many remarks of my own. I should also have spent more time on the Donoughmore Constitution and on the 1940's and 1950's when Professor Pakeman was in the thick of things. I certainly could have done with more time with him for I would have liked to know more about Caldecott, Stanley, Fletcher, Drayton and other personnel apart from constitutional and political matters in the 1930's and 1940's.

M.W. Roberts
12.2.66

Unrecorded Information provided by Professor S.A. Pakeman, February 1966.

There was racial feeling between the Ceylonese themselves. Caste came into consideration. He could remember one occasion when Clementi [Sir Cecil Clementi, Col. Sec., 1923-25(?)] was "furious". Clementi had invited Sir Paul Pieris to tea in Kandy, a tea-party to which George E. De Silva or some such politician [he was not certain who; he thought it was George] had also been invited. Sir Paul Pieris refused on these grounds. Clementi was "furious". Getting such politicians and overcoming racial prejudices had been one of the purposes of such invitations.

I raised the question of Ceylonisation and said that non-Europeans felt that they were excluded from G.A.ships and higher administrative posts. His response was "Oh, it was ...": apparently agreeing that this was so. He said that Ceylonisation was coming in "just about the time [he] left". I asked him whether this reluctance to allow Ceylonese to accept high posts was a deliberate policy. He did not answer this one but went on to state that personally he did not agree [with this policy]. "I think it was wrong", he said. He reiterated his standpoint: Ceylonese should not have been excluded but should have been admitted [to higher administrative posts] earlier. He added: "Of course this was the sort of thing that was frowned upon in those days. Well, I think it was wrong anyway".

E.W. Perera, he considered not very sound and "a demagogue"; he "didn't have any brains".

Sir Solomon Dias Bandaranaike, he considered "a remarkable old chap". In response to my views he agreed that Sir S.D.B's book showed signs of "self-importance", putting it in a rather milder form than I had ventured. He added that Sir S.D.B. "was as pompous as he looked".

Sir Baron Jayalika, was "a good chap". He "didn't have the strength of character to be a leader".

C.W.W. Kannangara, had "a rasping voice but underneath he was weak".

He knew Sir E.B. Denham as Governor of Jamaica as well. I remarked that he was not popular in Ceylon upon which he said, "He was not popular anywhere". Elaborating this he stated that Denham's trouble was that he took all the credit to himself and put all the blame on others. He was ambitious. I remarked that, nevertheless, he had some ability and Professor Pakeman agreed: "Oh yes, he had tremendous drive".

He seemed to think that Sir Tom Southorn was pretty good, though "orthodox".

Sir Cecil Clementi, was "academic". In response to my query to the effect he agreed that Clementi was a bit too academic. I explained how Bowes had called him "a freak" and all manner of things, upon which he said: "Well, he would". Bowes and Clementi were not the type to hit it off. Bowes was a very efficient administrator.

D.S. Senanayake had "his feet firmly on the ground". As Soulbury remarked, he "had a remarkable sense of timing", i.e. he knew when to do a thing. Professor Pakeman had a great respect for him. I asked him whether D.S. hadn't driven some good men from office, but he had nothing to say on this point. He seemed to agree with my point that D.S. had his prejudices. He said, "Tourism was one". Apparently D.S.was not very keen on encouraging it. Once when the Tourist Board had asked for Rs. 120,000 they had got only 20,000.

Jennings always maintained that it was D.A.'s constitution and not his in that Jennings had merely put D.S.'s ideas into constitutional form.

Drummond Shiels (in his last years) always used to maintain: "Jennings can't see beyond Westminster".

A. S. Harrison - "a very intelligent" chap.

Wedderburn - he considered "pedestrian".

M.W. Roberts
February and 17 March 1966.

REGINALD SYDNEY VERNON POULIER, O.B.E.

b. 3 August 1894.

B.A., London.

1 October 1914 - 31 July 1919 in the Education Department.

C.C.S. 1919 - 1952.

1 Aug. 1919	apptd. to C.C.S. by the Governor.
1 Aug. 1919	attached to Galle Kachcheri.
7 Feb. 1921	O.A., Matale.
23 Feb. 1922	P.M., Matale.
1 March 1923	Acting D.J., Tangalla.
20 Oct. 1924	Additional D.J., Mannar & Mullaittivu and O.A., Mannar.
12 Dec. 1925	Additional A.G.A., Colombo.
29 March 1927	on leave.
24 Oct. 1927	Com'er of Requests, Kandy.
1 Oct. 1928	Additional D.J., Com'er of Requests and P.M., Kegalla as well.
10 Nov. 1928	A.G.A., Mullaittivu.
28 Oct. 1931	A.G.A., Colombo.
27 April 1934	on leave.
29 Oct. 1934	A.G.A., Mannar.
10 Aug. 1935	A.G.A., Kegalla.
10 April 1937	Acting G.A., Sabaragamuwa.
19 May 1939	on leave.
20 Nov. 1939	Controller of Finance & Supply.
24 April 1940	Suptd. of Census.
5 Aug. 1940	Registrar General and Director, Govt. Tourist and Publicity Bureau.
21 March 1941	Food Controller and Controller of Prices.
1 May 1945	Food Com'er (Control & Distribution).
1 Oct. 1947	Perm. Sec., Ministry of Food & Cooperative Undertakings as well.
20 Sept. 1948	Perm. Sec., Ministry of Home Affairs & Rural Development.
1954(?) - 56	Senator.
1956	Nominated Member in the House of Representatives

Comments on Interview with Mr. R.S.V. Poulier, 1 August 1966.

Mr. Poulier did not wish to have a recorded interview and was worried about libel, etc. It followed that he would be cautious. He also appeared to be very modest and said that he did not want to hit the limelight and emphasise what he had achieved. In the event he did talk about some of his own activities, particularly his farm-school in Kegalla. In the event too, he was fairly frank in his comments and was much less inhibited than I anticipated; this is revealed in his references to individuals.

His memory seemed quite fresh and he was able to relate many stories plus excerpts from conversations in illustration of a point. He was also quick off the mark and seemed to have a grasp of a wide range of matters. On the whole, he appeared to be a competent and knowledgeable officer; possibly inclined towards orthodoxy. But he was certainly not orthodox in preferring the lonely outstations to Colombo and the towns and would certainly have been the Secretariat's delight on this point. This is explained by his interest in wild life; but it is on record that (at one stage in his career) he did not know the difference between an elk and a sambhur. I have heard a Ceylonese, whose opinion is entitled to some weight, refer to him as a most inefficient official but that is not how he struck me.

A practical man I should think from his interest in the farm-school and other points that emerged during the interview; also very assiduous and thorough: e.g. again, the farm-school and the fact that he studied various agricultural matters himself so as to teach the trainees.

M.W. Roberts
22 August 1966.

UNRECORDED INTERVIEW WITH MR. R.S.V. POULIER, 1 AUGUST 1966.

Dyson, Bartlett, Hellings and 'Papaw' Brown were some of the people he had worked under. Dyson and Bartlett were constantly asking him what the British had done wrong in Ceylon and what he would do if he was in their place ('Get rid of you lot first' Poulier had quipped at times). Dyson had been one of the best of the Civil Servants. I inquired whether he was very able. Poulier did not think so; he was nothing brilliant but his high regard for Dyson was the result of Dyson's kindness and sympathy. A keen Christian, Dyson helped people very generously; often unostentatiously and in ways known to few; e.g. having dismissed a clerk Dyson gave him and his family board (at the Residency) and lodging.

Mr. Poulier thought very highly of Newnham. 'He was a man who could see both sides of the question'; he used to seek out and was aware of Ceylonese opinion. He used to joke about the policies of Government. He was also very able and should have risen to be a Colonial Governor. I asked whether the fact that he had not done so was not a bad reflection on British rule. He agreed wholeheartedly. He added that Newnham used to make severe remarks and agreed that he was very fond of quips. He had done very good work as Commissioner of Relief during the malaria epidemic.

When Mr. Poulier had been transferred to Kegalla he found himself without any Office Assistants at all, though Gimson before him had had two. Newnham had arrived one day and laughed and said, 'I suppose Collins has done the usual trick and left you Ceylonese without the necessary hands'. (One O.A. had been sent after a time.) I asked why Collins followed such a policy. Mr. Poulier seemed quite convinced that it was meant to show the Ceylonese in a bad light. As a matter of fact it helped them. They had to work harder and cover more ground and got to know more.

Mark Young was very able. I inquired whether he was inclined to stand on his dignity. Mr. Poulier was quite positive that he did not. I think Mr. Poulier said that he was liberal in his views and not anti-native but my memory is hazy on this point.

As a Cadet and an Office Assistant Mr. Poulier was not taken out on circuit though his seniors did invite him for meals. He felt that the training and help he had received from his G.A's were not particularly good. He had to pick most things up himself and on the job. In Galle he had been under W.O. Stevens as far as judicial training went. Stevens was a very good judge and magistrate. He hardly spoke in Court and this was done as a matter of policy, to avoid giving the lawyers any cues.

I inquired whether British rule lacked purpose and drive. He did not agree wholly. He felt that 'the great thing' that they had established was 'law and order'. They had not shown much initiative on matters of land and land tenure.

In reply to my query he said that he did not think that many of the British Civil Servants of the early and mid 1920's realised that self-government was on the way and would occur during their lifetime. Most thought it was not possible for quite some time.

In reply to my inquiry whether British Civil Servants showed bias in decisions between Europeans and Ceylonese, as a generalisation, he was inclined to think so. For one thing their thought-patterns were similar and they would be more prone to accept the view of the European.

In reply to my comments, he agreed that officials were too aloof and exclusive. This was not so in the outstations but was true of the bigger towns, particularly Colombo. The European clubs were exclusive; this was disliked. Mr. Poulier himself preferred the outstations and asked the Secretariat to post him as far from Colombo as possible. [N.B. He is a wild-life enthusiast.]

Fletcher was not very able and was not liked. He used to go back on what he said or 'water it down', once he was criticised. I think he said that he was weak.

In the late 1920's the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council had power without responsibility. They used to indulge in ill-formed and unreasonable criticisms. In response to my query, Mr. Poulier said that it was greatly resented by the Civil Servants.

He had not been consulted by the Civil Service Committee who had met the Donoughmore Commissioners in camera.

Stanley was a very nice man. Liberal and genuinely sympathetic to the progress towards self-government.

Of the three, Woods, Tyrrell, Wedderburn, the latter was 'the best'. Woods was certainly very able.

Regarding Tyrrell, he related a story which indicates his standing among the Ceylonese Civil Servants. On one occasion Tyrrell had greeted Poulier heartily and clapped him on the back. As soon as Tyrrell was out of earshot, P. Saravanamuttu who had been nearby, said semi-jokingly: 'I say, Poulier, you are in for it tomorrow. I would not open the mail'. Actually, nothing happened. But Poulier was positive that Tyrrell was not to be trusted. 'Was he inclined to stand on his dignity?', I inquired. Mr. Poulier nodded. Further queries elicited confirmation that Tyrrell was rather of the old school and not very understanding.

Regarding the relations between D.S. Senanayake and Edmund Rodrigo: on one occasion D.S. had met Poulier in Kegalla and waved a letter which he had received from Rodrigo and asked him to look at it, saying, 'Look at the way he writes', implying, 'what can I do with such a chap'. The letter was rather fierce. Rodrigo's minutes and letters to his Minister 'verged on the offensive'. 'Rude?', I inquired. 'Rude is too hard a word to describe them', said Mr. Poulier. Much of the trouble had been because of a difference in their cultural background. Rodrigo's polished and high-flown style of writing did not go down well with D.S. and contributed to misunderstanding. I inquired whether Rodrigo was merely an essay-writer and office type and not a practical administrator. Mr. Poulier was quite positive that this was not true.

On one occasion when Poulier, D.S. and Rodrigo were travelling in a car, Poulier had told D.S. (semi-jocularly?) that he would vet Rodrigo's letters hereafter and see that they were not offensive.

On another occasion D.S., having heard of Poulier's interest in a practical farm school in Kegalla, had sought him out and wished to encourage it. Looking for a means of financing it, Poulier had pointed to an unused vote on a related matter which had been granted to the Director of Agriculture (Rodrigo). Poulier suggested that he (Poulier) would write to Rodrigo about it. But D.S. had said that he would see to it. D.S. had not realised that there were certain administrative forms and principles under which such a change must be undertaken and had merely written to Rodrigo and asked him to give the money to Poulier. Rodrigo was highly annoyed -as he told Poulier - because Poulier would spend the money and he (Rodrigo) would have to account for it. It did not take long for Poulier to settle this matter but it was the sort of thing which need not have arisen at all.

Caldecott was very liberal. He had a very difficult time with Layton. On one occasion Mr. Poulier was present when Layton had used Caldecott like a messenger. Afterwards Caldecott had commented ruefully about this and told him, 'You are no doubt surprised to see me treated in this way', and answering, said, 'We British will take anything in wartime'.

Poulier had been involved in Layton's decision to transfer Leigh-Clare from the post of Collector of Customs. Layton had been dissatisfied with the rate at which goods were clearing the warehouses. Leigh-Clare had said it was due to the transport and distribution services (Poulier's province). But Layton had met Poulier just before and investigated this point. He told Leigh-Clare that Poulier had done more than humanly possible and transferred Leigh-Clare to some other post.

Layton used pretty direct and strong language. He knew it too. He had explained to Mr. Poulier once from where he picked it up and added, 'You Ceylonese are too sensitive about such things'.

Mr. Poulier did not thing highly of H.M. Moore, the last Governor. I believe he did not think him all that liberal and felt he was rather old school.

In the war years when he was Controller of Prices and later from 1945 when he was Food Commissioner, G.C.S. Corea was his Minister. Corea was prone to listen to too many views and had not been strong enough. On one occasion when Poulier had suggested a rationing scheme, Corea had given much attention to criticisms of this scheme as well as encouraged other schemes which were being suggested. At a big meeting on this subject with twenty others, including members of the Executive Committee, each member had a scheme in mind. Poulier had asked for details of each scheme and broken them down one by one. In this way they had gone through twenty schemes. It should have been patent to Corea that Poulier knew his onions after five or six of these had been discussed. Subsequently, in fact, Poulier's rationing scheme had been praised by an English expert who came here; he had wired back that it was better than the British one.

In reply to my comment that D.S. Senanayake's cabinet had been a mediocre bunch, he seemed to agree. He referred to A. Ratnayake, one of the Ministers he had to deal with when he was, I think, Permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Home Affairs and said that he 'didn't know a hang about administration'. He added that Ratnayake usually followed what Poulier suggested. Another of his Ministers, E.A.P. Wijeyratne, used to suggest 'cock and bull methods' with regard to food control. Instead of rejecting these outright, Poulier used to be tactful and write something to the strain of: 'This suggestion is funny. The possible courses are (a) ...,

(b) ..., (c) .... I suggest (c) because ...' Wijeyratne usually accepted this advice.

Banda had never expected to win the 1956 elections as he had admitted to Poulier. The rest of Banda's remarks had been (roughly) as follows: 'I would have chosen my candidates with greater care if I knew that I was going to win. Look at the material I've got to deal with. Look at the Ministers I have had to appoint'. Poulier himself had a very low opinion of Banda's cabinet.

At a meeting of the Select Committee which was considering amendments to the Constitution in the time of S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, Poulier, had spoken highly of the Donoughmore Constitution and its Executive Committee system and the training in administration which it provided politicians. Banda had summoned him that evening and said that he was glad that Poulier spoke in such a strain because he himself admired the Donoughmore Constitution. Banda added that he dared not speak in the same sense publicly; but wished to encourage Poulier in airing such views. He had called him in to obviate any possibility that Poulier would tone down his views, believing that Banda was opposed to them. Poulier had replied that he was very glad to hear this because he had wondered whether Banda would think that he was favouring a Constitution which gave greater scope and protection to the minority communities.

Regarding chena cultivation, the British administration had not realised that it was often a question of sufficient food for the cultivators. P. Saravanamuttu and Poulier - when Poulier was A.G.A. Mullaittivu, November 1928 to October 1931 - had quite a tussle with the Secretariat on this question and had not found it easy to persuade the latter that chena licenses had not been granted liberally. Poulier implied that, of course, he granted licenses liberally only where needed and that he gave due consideration to Crown interests. I commented that this issue was most notably reflected in the conflict between Freeman and the Secretariat and that Freeman symbolised the humanitarian and more lenient approach. Poulier said, 'Yes, but to the point of being unreasonable'. I inquired whether Freeman was naive and gullible. Without any hesitation, he agreed; and provided an example. During his State Council days, Freeman had produced a handful of rice and said that it was an example of the bad rice that Government was distributing. D.S. Senanayake had brought this rice to Poulier (who must have been Controller of Prices). Poulier had examined it and pointed out that it was mixed rice consisting of several different varieties of grain. D.S. had used this point the next day in his defence against Freeman's criticism. In the meanwhile a messenger had been despatched to Anuradhapura to ask the authorities to ascertain from where Freeman had got this rice. It had been discovered that Freeman had got the rice from his kitchen but it had been a portion from a pile of bad rice. It was the practice of his servants to sift the bad from the good rice and keep the former in a separate pile for use in cooking meals for beggars. Naturally, this consisted of several varieties of rice and was of poor quality.

I inquired whether the Britisher's antipathy to chena cultivation stemmed from the fact that they were used to permanent crops in Europe and could not conceive of this form of cultivation as anything less than wasteful; whether, in fact, they looked at the matter with European eyes. He was inclined to agree. He cited an example of this sort of attitude. In later years in the 1940's when he sent a memorandum to the Colonial Office showing how rice could not be grown that easily in the Dry Zone (in connection with the drive towards increased rice production), they had sent an expert from Edinburgh named Clyde to investigate this aspect. It was not until Clyde had been taken on a tour that he realised what problems they faced in growing rice in the Dry Zone. As Clyde had commented, they had not been able to grasp this in England and not understand why they could clear forests and grow rice. I inquired whether British policy stemmed from the fact that they saw that shifting cultivation had created dustbowls in other countries and felt that similar results would occur here, adding that I considered such views unscientific and not adequately cognisant of different climatic conditions. Poulier simply said that the British considered that a crop produced from chena cultivation was worth only a few hundreds whereas the timber was worth a few thousands.

Poulier had been consulted in drafting the Land Development Ordinance of 1935. I inquired if G.L.D. Davidson had a hand in it. He said, 'Yes, he had been very useful and helped a lot'. C.L. Wickremesinghe had consulted Poulier quite often and sometimes said, 'Brayne says this, Davidson says this, D.S. says this, this is the position, what do you say?' Brayne had included a clause which said that G.A's should be legally compelled to enforce this Ordinance. Poulier had been against this and said that if G.A's did not apply the Ordinance they could be transferred. I asked him what sort of man Brayne was. He said that Brayne was very 'well-intentioned but obstinate'. I inquired if several G.A's were opposed to Brayne and his ways. He said that this had been the case. He added that the Ceylonese officers had put their heart and soul into working this Ordinance. The older G.A's were not greatly in favour of this Ordinance. I inquired whether they had been obstructionist. He said, 'No, that would be putting it too strongly'. He agreed that such G.A's had not put their best foot forward.

He added that the architects of this Ordinance had underestimated the number of staff officers that would be needed to administer this Ordinance. They had not realised how long it would take and how many officers more were needed to implement it. Administering it meant examining the land, choosing allottees, etcetera. All this took time and it was very difficult to check everything. It was much slower to work than they had anticipated. Both C.L. and Poulier had definitely underestimated the difficulties.

I inquired whether the peasant allottees had realised that this form of tenure was virtually freehold. He said, 'No, because it could not be mortgaged'. In terms of peasant thinking what was desirable was land which could be mortgaged. Therefore, those who had land did not care for this form of grant, but those who possessed none were glad to have something at least. As G.A., Sabaragamuwa most of the allotments he had given were part of village expansion schemes. Colonisation had come later. I asked how they chose allottees. He said that obviously chaps who were lame would not be chosen. They had to be able to cultivate the land and have an interest in agriculture. Later on in the interview, he said that in the early years most of the original colonists were chosen from town areas. On further query I found that he meant people from district towns like Kegalla rather than Colombo. I am not quite certain whether he is confused here and that in using the phrase 'town areas' is referring to the more sophisticated peasants from the Western Province as distinct from the relatively more rural orientated peasantry of outlying areas. He said that, on the whole, the allottees from the urban areas had not been a success.

Regarding the prevalence of <u>ande</u>[1] agreements among colonists, he said that administrators would have tended to have allowed this rather than punish those concerned because the tendency would be for this practice to decline once the sons of colonists grew up. I inquired whether an intermediate form of punishment less severe than eviction could not have been evolved to meet such practices as <u>ande</u>, e.g: a fine. He said that a peasant would rather go to jail than pay a fine and inquired what form of intermediate punishment they could use. I suggested labour. He said that it would be nice if they could regiment people thus but it was not possible. He agreed that in practice very few evictions took place.

<u>Regarding the headman system and its influence on elections in the 1930's</u>: he agreed that it was very important. As A.G.A., Kegalla he had two elections within his district [in 1936]. One was in

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[1] Sharecropping.

Avissawella, where N.M. Perera had defeated Adeline Molamure. N.M. had never expected to win. Before the count he had alleged that some of the ballot boxes had been filled with blocks of specially marked votes while the boxes had been transferred from booth to centre, and that this should be evident once the boxes were opened because they would be in blocks. Poulier had asked N.M. to be present when he opened the boxes. They had found nothing of this sort in any box. I inquired what contributed to N.M's victory. He said that there had been criticism against the headmen system. There was a reaction against feudal influence. I inquired whether the social work done by the L.S.S.P. during the malaria epidemic had helped. He was quite positive that this had helped the L.S.S.P. In fact, the people had been surprised at the aid provided by N.M. and others and expected that there was some catch in it, when there was none.

The other election was in the Kegalla area and was between A.A. Wickremesinghe and Keerthiratne. The latter won. The contest was purely a caste issue, Keerthiratne being of a lower caste. Prior to this, the higher caste leaders had been appalled when Poulier appointed Keerthiratne to the sanitary board. But Poulier and A.E. Christoffelsz had been following a policy of giving lower castes greater attention; they had gone against previous practice and appointed low-caste headmen in low-caste regions. I inquired if the high-caste headmen had supported Wickremasinghe. I think he answered that A.A. Wickremasinghe had been criticising the headmen and did not have their support. The picture is not quite clear however. Personally, I cannot see the higher caste headmen supporting Keerthiratne.

In reply to my inquiries he said that A.A. Wickremasinghe owned a fair amount of land in the district. He was a proctor. His father had been a Lowcountryman who had settled in the district. This was true of E.A.P. Wijeyratne as well. E.A.P. was a poor boy who had been brought up and educated by the Catholic fathers in the district. As a boy it was said that he was holy in the presence of the priests but quite the opposite when they were out of sight. Subsequently he had renounced Catholicism. A.A. Wickremasinghe was a nervous type who could never sit still and kept pacing up and down when he spoke.

On the subject of land speculation, he agreed that Charles Batuwantudawe and A.A. Wickremasinghe were speculators. On my suggesting Meedeniya Adigar's name he was inclined to think that Meedeniya helped the European Companies to get land. I inquired whether other ratemahatmayas also acted in this manner, but he did not think so. He added that, in any event, this sort of thing ended once D.S. Senanayake came in.

Two of his achievements in Kegalla were to ensure that buses ran to time and to start a practical farm school with ten lads being taught every six months. Prior to this, there had been competition for passengers between the different companies with passengers being virtually hauled from one bus to that of another company. He had taken steps to see that the buses ran at regular intervals. I inquired whether the bus mudalalis had influenced the outcome of elections. He said, 'Yes', quite positively. They had refused to run buses for voters who did not support their candidate. But it was more usual for them to act on a monetary basis, demanding some money in order to transport supporters of one candidate.

At Mullaittivu in 1931 there was an election, but in Jaffna there was a boycott. The people had followed the advice of an Indian lady named Mrs. Chatta ... (Dyson called her Mrs. Chatterbox) and decided not to contest elections under the Donoughmore Constitution. On nomination day or the day after Poulier was surprised to find Dyson (G.A., Jaffna) at his doorstep. Dyson had come to relate the events of the day and wanted to know if he had acted correctly. Apparently the potential candidates did not trust each other for they had come to the kachcheri with their applications ready and sat at a point equidistant from the box just in case one or the other decided to break the boycott decision. The last two minutes had been tense. Dyson felt that if he had given any sign or any encouragement, they might have slipped their applications in. He had given none. I inquired how this had come about and why there was no firm decision on this point. He said that there was much personal animosity and no unanimity among the Tamil politicians. Apart from the fact that they were peeved at the Consitution, it was said that neither the Colombo Tamils nor the Jaffna Tamils, who were beginning to challenge the ascendancy of the Colombo Tamils, were willing to test the relative strength of their popularity by going to the polls. They were frightened to go to the polls at a time when universal franchise was in operation and to risk defeat.

I inquired what sort of man W. Duraiswamy had been. He said, 'Very quiet'.

Comments on Interview with Sir Gilbert Rennie, G.B.E., K.C.M.G., 30.11.1965

Though quite friendly to me, he was very reserved and restrained during the interview. I do not think this was because of the tape. He was not oblivious to it though it was out of sight (we were talking across a table : an arrangement of his of some significance) but I think restraint was part of his nature : viz. the reserved type of British official. Indeed, his comments and views were rather watery and comparatively, of little value.

This may have been due to a reluctance to generalise. But he was simply not a forthright type. Indeed, when it came to political matters he seems to have had a singular lack of interest in the Donoughmore Constitution etc. when out in Ceylon. Again, this may be due to rather vague recollections and any review of his answers will probably reveal that he claimed lack of recollection quite often . In this connection one should note that he seemed quite hale and hearty and was a competent driver though aged 70, so any suspicions of senility should be ruled out.

On the whole, rather a tradition-bound type of officer, I should think; one who concentrated on sports and one who did not take as deep an interest in political matters as other Civil Servants. It is of some relevance that Stubbs chose him as his secretary.

A pedestrian type, I think. In this view if I recall correctly, Sir Franklin Gimson would join me, (and Newnham certainly does).

Since he did not serve extensively in the Provinces and since his Colombo posts were rather uninteresting ones, the range of questions I had was limited. Where he might have been useful - in revealing a picture of Stubbs and Stubbs' views etc. on the politicians and the Donoughmore Constitution, he was noticeably restrained and in the effect unhelpful. His assessment of Stubbs' certainly does not have the same critical depth which other views have revealed. Indeed, on appraisals of men he was most guarded - a reaction that is quite natural but which was not characteristic of many of the other Civil Servants interviewed. I would hesitate to accept his views on individuals because of this.

M.W.Roberts
29.11.65

Unrecorded Information provided by Mr. Derek Rowan during a consersation 31 July 1966.

Mr. Rowan, a lawyer, worked with Julius & Creasy from 1931-62.

S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike never expected to win the 1956 election and his troubles arose from this fact. He was 'enmeshed in his election manifesto' and never shook himself free of his promises.

In 1958 there were some serious strikes in the Mercantile sector which were encouraged by Government. A big group of mercantile employers etc. - about 75 of them - had to meet Banda on one occasion to receive 'a pep-talk'. They met before this meeting and one of them - Rowan preferred not to name him - stressed that they should make it a point not to laugh at any of Banda's jokes. Sure enough, Banda produced a couple of his stock jokes etc. They remained poker-faced. Banda was 'utterly nonplussed'. At the end of his talk, Banda gave them ten minutes to discuss matters among themselves before raising questions. But their spokesman eventually said there were no questions. Banda was furious and thumped the table and said, 'I demand that you should tell me what you are planning to do'.

This strike issue was just before emergency '58. On the day that emergency was declared a number of prominent citizens met Banda and asked him to declare an emergency. Banda implied that, surely, it was not that serious and refused. Several hours later he had had to do so.

It was said that the Indian ambassador had called on Banda that morning and warned him that if he did not take action, his Government would be compelled to intervene; and that this had forced Banda to take action at long last. Mr. Rowan could vouch for the fact that the ambassador (Gundevi?) had called on Banda that morning though he did not know what transpired.

It was Oliver who had saved the situation on that occasion. He had acted with commendable firmness. One example was the imperious way in which he had commandeered some ships, one French and three British. He had summoned the firms concerned and said that he would do so whatever they said and 'face the consequences afterwards'. The agents had been debarred from informing their principals in London.

Banda was 'generous to his opponents'. Sir John never was.

On my query Mr. Rowan confirmed the fact that O.E. was badly in debt before the war. As Deputy Auditor-General, he had come in daily to Julius & Creasy and asked that his Rs. 237/ debt be deferred.

It was said that O.E. became Auditor-General by using the 'ploy' of encouraging and aiding the then Auditor-General to become

President of the Turf Club.

Mr. Rowan virtually stated that O.E. had made money during the war. He believed there were 685 audit queries. O.E. 'had covered his tracks' by sending telegrams to a bookmaker in Madras worded 'backing horses heavily'. He had then kept those where he had won. These telegrams were part of an arrangement and not acted upon. In any event, he 'amassed a fortune'. As Julius & Creasy had handled the money he could confirm it.

Mrs. Rowan stressed that O.E. did not like her husband and had 'badgered him' continually, threatening to cancel his Temporary Residence Permit and the like. (Mr. Rowan did not seem to agree with this statement.) Mrs. Rowan said that this was because her husband was too independent and stood up to O.E.

It transpired that O.E. had rung him up two days before he(O.E.) was chucked out of Ceylon and wanted to consult him. This was for legal counsel and it had been a large-scale affair with G.G. Ponnambalam present besides office paraphenalia (stenographers etc.). O.E. had come to Rowan's house quite openly. Two days later he left. Only the Australian, British and W. German ambassadors were there to see him off. Not one member of Government came. Mr. Rowan considered that Government treated him 'despicably' at this stage and had hounded him unmercifully.

A week after O.E. left - and, mind you, all this was a considerable time after the attempted coup - the Police had rung Mr. Rowan up and asked if he could come to the station at a certain time. Mr. Rowan, just being 'bloody-minded', had inquired whether he could not come at once. On arrival he had been questioned on O.E's visit. He had admitted that O.E. had come there and added that he could not divulge what had transpired, that they could not compel him to do so, and that he would claim legal privilege and demand to see the President of the Law Society and the British High Commissioner. From the interrogator's notes Mr. Rowan had seen that he thought that Mr. Rowan was the Manager of the B.C.C. Company (and not the head of Julius & Creasy, a legal firm). The chap had soon discovered this mistake. After seeing his superior he essayed a final query - 'Was the discussion related to the coup?' Mr. Rowan had truthfully said, 'No'. The error regarding Mr. Rowan's occupation was because they had got the information from O.E's driver. The Police had been doing a whole range of questioning. Mr. Rowan felt that all this was unnecessary. If O.E. was implicated in the coup they would have had whatever dope was available long before. This was mere badgering.

Three Civil Servants who had impressed Mr. Rowan were Woods, Newnham and Woolley. Woods had done a great deal to minimise the impact of the Depression and was a tough campaigner. On my query whether he was unpopular with the politicians he said something to the effect of 'not all that unpopular. Certainly not as much as Huxham and one of the first Legal Secretaries'.

When Leach's and Stace's names cropped up during our conversation it appeared that Mr. Rowan thought well of their abilities. Murphy had not been all that good as Mayor of Colombo.

In the early 1930's almost all the members of the State Council were in debt; largely due to election expenses. This was also a period when there was a great deal of foreclosing on mortgages. Much of this was inevitable though the State Bank of India behaved rather despicably. It was unfortunate, however, in that the Law of Mortgage was passed at this time. The Ceylonese insisted that only the particular property mortgaged should be liable to seizure. This had and continues to have a detrimental effect on the credit afforded to individuals.

Mr. Rowan thought Caldecott was a 'run of the mill' Governor. The best of the Governors he had contact with was 'Monkey' Moore.

M.W. Roberts
31/7/66 and 3/8/66

Comments on Interviews with Mr. Edmund Samarakkody, 23 April and 28 June 1967.

Mr. Samarakkody was shyly insistent that a tape-recorder was not necessary; but was otherwise very cooperative and genial. He was careful on certain issues but moderately frank. His memory seemed fair-middling.

Very modest and humble in approach, he did not strike me as being a dominating or domineering type. I would say he liked to consider himself an intellectual type of comrade rather than a parish-pump politician; that is, preferring Marxist study circle and trade-union work to platform speaking. He was not very facile in choosing his words and tended to speak in clichés at times and to repeat certain phrases constantly.

His comments must be viewed in the light of his present position and the new political complexions around him. As a leader of the small splinter group of the Lanka SamaSamajist Party, which refused to join the coalition with the S.L.F.P. in 1965 and remains today a small voice crying in the wilderness, his attitude towards the past is bound to be a different one to the Mr. Edmund Samarakkody of 1964. There was certainly a strong tinge of the doctrinaire in his views with a tendency to criticise heretics. But he was not bitter or cynical or polemic. Bias was there - generally evident - but he provided discrinінating comments on his former comrades. The fact that he mentioned such figures as Vernon Gunasekera (Cf. the official L.S.S.P. history) bears testimony to a willingness to take a rounded view. Many of the facts he presented accorded with the circumstances as I know them.

M.W. Roberts
29 April and 27 May 1967.

Unrecorded Interviews with Mr. Edmund Samarakkody,
23 April and 29 June 1967.

First Interview, 23 April 1967.

[In response to Mr. Samarakkody's wish, this interview was not recorded. Notes were taken during the interview, facilitated greatly by Mr. Samarakkody's cooperation. This record is a refined and expanded version of these notes. I have presented these in question (Q) and answer (A) form but also included some straight descriptive reporting.]

In response to my queries, Mr. Samarakkody stated that he was educated at St. Thomas; thus "a conservative background". But he qualified this by saying that St. Thomas was not all that conservative in that all the students were not from upper middle-class well-to-do families unlike Royal. "And St. Thomas now?" I inquired. "And St. Thomas now", he agreed. In response to a query to that effect he agreed that St. Thomas' was over-westernized. No one thought of speaking in Sinhalese.
Q. "Was that considered infra-dig?" A. "No. We just did not think of talking in Sinhalese". He agreed further that his background was definitely urban. Q. I inquired what had prompted him to take an interest in politics and to participate actively in political affairs. He replied that the 1930's was the time of the Indian nationalist movement. Q. I inquired if there was much literature on the subject or whether our newspapers played it up. He replied that some of their leaders paid visits to Ceylon. He repeated that the Indian movement had "a noticeable influence". "We could not escape the atmosphere of the Indian nationalist movement, of leaders like Gandhi, Nehru and Kamaladevi ...." He added that the 1930's saw the beginning of the anti-imperialist movement in Ceylon; and was specially reflected in the Suriya Mal movement. The Suriya Mal movement "concretised anti-imperialism". This was about the time - 1932 - Mr. Samarakkody entered politics. Q. I inquired if he had joined the Colombo South Youth League. I cannot recollect his answer but he did imply that it was one of the expressions of the anti-imperialist feeling, adding that it included such people as Vernon Gunasekera and Stanley De Zoysa. Q. I inquired about the split in the Colombo South Youth League involving Caldera. He agreed that

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there had been a kind of split, but did not consider it important and worth dwelling on. The split had been on personal grounds. In response to a query, he said that the Youth Leagues had originated as part of anti-imperialism and were not Marxist sponsored. I inquired whether the Marxist group had not laid much emphasis on these bodies as a means of pressing the anti-imperialist line and, ultimately, the Marxist line. He agreed that the Marxists did emphasise the Youth League movement but was very positive in affirming that they relied a great deal more on the Suriya Mal movement than that of the Youth Leagues.

Returning to the earlier theme I inquired what sort of reading had inspired him as a youth. He replied that he had done very little reading while at school. His reading began while he was at Law College. In response to my inquiry whether it was socialist literature or that on the Indian nationalist movement or Ireland, he said that it was "Marxist literature". The Left Book Club had been functioning then. Q. I inquired if many law students were interested in this sort of reading. He was quite definite that only a few were. I pointed out that the Left Book Club in Britain was very much a group of common-room pinkness, implying that they were not deeply committed in the active sense. He agreed but said that that presented "an opening" - presumably an opening into active Marxist politics. Q. "Was this common-room pink true of Ceylon as well?" A. He did not think so. "We straightaway got into the mass movement". Q. "Who were the members of the inner group?" The names he mentioned were: Colvin R.De Silva, Leslie Goonewardena, N.M.Perera, Philip Gunawardena, Vernon Gunasekera. I inquired about Vernon. He said Vernon was a very active chap. He had "a high ideological level even at that stage". He was a livewire. I pointed to the fact that in the recently written [1961] short history of the L.S.S.P., Vernon's name is mentioned only once. He replied that, in retrospect, Vernon's allegiance had been superficial. He was "witty" and "created impressions" and liked it. Q. "Showmanship", A. "Showmanship, yes", said he, clutching at the word.

I inquired whether Dr. S.A. Wickremasinghe had been one of the inner group and what sort of chap he was? He smiled and said they all used to call him "a medical socialist;" "More social service" than socialism; i.e. social service norms

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rather than genuine socialist grounding made Dr. S.A. Wickremasinghe a member of the group. He "never seriously understood Marxism". Q. "It would seem that as an Independent member of the State Council from 1931-36 Dr. S.A. was not very active but when he went to Britain he came back as a member of the Communist Party?" Mr. Samarakkody said that the Marxist group of the old days (early 1930's) was Trotskyite. "Trotskyism was the dominant note". The split in Ceylon came in 1939. Q. "Why in 1939 and not earlier; after all the international split had been much earlier?" A. "The war question came up", [meaning the question of the line they should take on the war]. Q. "Was Dr. S.A. of 1939 the same as Dr. S.A. of the early 1930's? Had the [second] visit to Britain created any changes and a deeper attachment to Marxism?" A. He did not think so. There had been "no ideological growth". He was merely interested in the mass movement and in exposing inequalities. Q. "What about Pieter Keuneman? Did you try to win him to your party when he came back?" A. "No". When he came he - both he and his wife (his first wife)- were known to be adherents of the Communist Party.

Q. "Philip was the leading light of the Marxist group at that time?" He agreed positively: Philip was the most dominant figure till they [the Marxist leaders] were jailed. He was a very able agitator. "Nothing more than that". Q. "Was Philip difficult to get on with?" He said that this was not perceived then. They were all "immersed in mass work" [i.e. work among the masses]. Q. I inquired if it was true that the idea of forming a Marxist party in Ceylon had been conceived in London when Philip and Colvin and others had been there. A. He replied that Leslie [Goonewardena] in particular had such ideas. N.M. had, throughout, been considered "a Laski Socialist". Elaborating, he said: "a vague Socialist". But he was a hard-worker [i.e. put in much industrious work for them in the 1930's and 1940's]. Q. I inquird whether N.M. hadn't been Philip's right-hand man, implying that he was merely that in the early stages. He replied that N.M. was always a follower till 1960. He was satisfied with Philip's, Leslie's and Colvin's leadership. Q. Regarding Mr. S's[1] personal place, I inquired whether he had been in the inner group by 1933-34 and whether this had entailed

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[1] Mr. Samarakkody's.

a special initiation in that one was given a kind of 'probationary training'. His answer was rather vague but it was implied that he had been accepted among the party hierarchy pretty early on, even before the official L.S.S.P. was constituted. He had not been subjected to any initiation 'course'. I inquired if he hadn't been going against his family in taking up active Marxist affiliations. A. "Yes". It was " a revolt against feudal features". His father had been a very strict type.

Turning my attention to aspects of policy in the 1930's I inquired why they had chosen to challenge Goonesinha? Hadn't there been many other (and new) avenues where trade-union work could have been undertaken? A. "A good question". They did explore new fields as well. But they could not avoid clashes because Goonesinha knew they were a danger. In these clashes he was generally the victor. I referred to their success in the Wellawatte Spinning and Weaving Mills and to the predominance they had gained soon enough. He replied that even in the 1930's they knew he was cracking. Q. "Cracking? In what way? And why do you say that?" He replied that "corruption" was the "weak side" of Goonesinha's unions. Goonesinha was beginning to come to terms with the employers behind the backs of the workers. The L.S.S.P. exposed him; but Mr. Samarakkody agreed with my interjection that Goonesinha, nevertheless, held the support of the harbour unions. He also confirmed the fact that Goonesinha raised "the anti-Indian cry" during the 1930's. Q. "But in doing so wasn't he cutting off a section of his support?" A. He did not mind that. He was tightening his connection with [i.e. presumably, hold over] others. Besides the agitation he raised was directed more against the Indian trader than against the Indian worker.

Q. "When did you begin to concentrate some attention on winning support among the plantation labour?" A. "Very late". Around 1939. Q. "Weren't the war years rather a bad choice for this sort of effort?" He replied that it was a period of "ferment, ferment, ferment". The Mool-oya strike had been particularly notable. Colvin played a big role. However, he conceded my point. He also agreed that they had faced the language problem in trying to win over estate labour. They did not have the personnel who could conduct a dialogue with the Indian workers. 1

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1. These are my words conveying the idea he presented.

I inquired whether Nehru's visit to Ceylon around 1939-40 and his advice that they should form a group such as the Ceylon Indian Congress had "knocked" the L.S.S.P. "Knocked us", he agreed. Q. "In view of Nehru's socialism wasn't this advice rather strange?" A. Nehru's socialism had been the outcome of a need "to mobilise mass support". It was, he thought, no injustice to Nehru to say that he was not deeply socialist. Q. "When he visited Ceylon did the L.S.S.P. have much contact with him?" A. Yes. They had invited him for a public meeting. He had been very critical of a slogan they had displayed there: 'Workers of the World Unite'. Had considered it unrealistic. Q. I inquired if the L.S.S.P. had not used Anthonypillai[1] in their attempts to make inroads into the plantation sector. A. "Not exactly. He was not doing plantation work as such". In fact, he did not know his Tamil well-enough.

I inquired about Esmond Wickremesinghe. He smiled, and replied that Esmond and Ilangakoon (son of the Attorney-General) had shown interest in the SamaSamajist movement and soon became members of the inner group. Q. "How would you explain his progression away from Marxism to the present ...?" A. "We made a mistake. Took him too seriously. He might have changed if he had been in the open group" [i.e.rather than the secret wing of the L.S.S.P. during the war years]. He added that much the same remarks applied to Ilangakoon.

Q. I inquired if these comments did not apply to Colvin R. De Silva of the 1930's and that Colvin's Marxism had only developed during the crucible of his experiences in the war years. A. "No. He [Colvin] had done a lot of background reading". He suggested that I read Colvin's book, <u>Whither the Soviet Union</u>? It was"a correct analysis". It showed that "his background was sound". Colvin showed "ability to concretize". He was "not abstract". Nevertheless, his reading, though "voracious" was not "systematic". He tended to oversimplify issues.

Q. "What about N.M.?" A. He said that N.M. had never been interested in much Marxist reading, and hadn't a Marxist library. Parliamentary procedure was his forte. He did not enter into serious discussions; and never participated in the ideological training of others, either through literature or in study groups. These comments apply to Philip Gunawardena as well.

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1. A Ceylon Tamil and inner-core Sama Samajist. Since the war "Tony" Anthonypillai has been resident in Madras.

Leslie, Colvin, Bernard [Soysa] and Doric [de Sousa] were the chief study-group leaders; and later Osmund Jayaratna. On my inquiries, he modestly confirmed that he himself had undertaken training of others through study-groups but affirmed that the above-mentioned group "were the people who were in charge of the work".

Q. I inquired what purpose the study-groups had served and if they were of any value? A. He said that they broadened their understanding of Marxism, and was particularly useful in distinguishing the Trot line. It was necessary to understand the differences [between Marxism and Trotskism I think]. Broadly speaking, in the party circles there was a consciousness of the basic differences. Q. "Weren't the discussions in the study-groups beyond some of the members?" A. "Yes. And when the party became involved in the mass movement, the development of the ideological background of the party lagged behind. The language question cropped up. Their ideological work was only in English. No real attempt was made to translate.

Q. Is it not correct to say that the Communist Party have paid greater attention to the workers and to propaganda among them through the vernacular? A. He agreed but pointed out that they had better resources (presumably referring to financial resources). Q. I inquired if this characteristic in the L.S.S.P. had turned out to be a bad thing for them? A. "We grew very fast as a mass movement to the neglect of organisation". Q. My next question is not very clear according to my notes being written as "... ideological basis?" This could refer to a query whether the L.S.S.P. rank and file had no sound ideological basis. A. "Yes; the dynamics of the Ceylon mass movement was not worked out [by the L.S.S.P. leaders]".

Q. I inquired about the sources of L.S.S.P. finances in the 1930's. A. Leslie had spent a lot of his money as also Colvin R. De Silva and Robert Gunawardena. In response to a further query re Robert, he said that Robert had had no ideological training but was very actively interested. Q. "Was he more the agitator-type?" A. "Not even that at the start". But he had begun to venture into this field later. With regard to the question of finances, he added (or possibly agreed to my prompting) that friends of the party like Harold Pieris had also helped. Q. I inquired whether the L.S.S.P. at this

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stage had lots of friends and supporters who could be classed within the lunatic fringe. A. He did not think that term applied. "Fellow-travellers" described them better. An example was Wilmot Perera. In response to my inquiry if Wilmot Perera [who is from a wealthy family] had helped them with money, he replied that he couldn't say.

Q. I pointed to the SamaSamajists who had not shown the virtue of self-denial and married money-making with Marxism. Wasn't Colvin's legal practice rather incongruous? A. "Yes. Colvin has ended up as a rich man". It was the quality of the party [L.S.S.P.] that had brought out the fact that Colvin also became one of the richest men in Ceylon today. One becomes popular by being in the left movement.

Q. "What was the organisational structure of the L.S.S.P. in the 1930's and 1940's?" A. It was democratic in its set-up. There were regular congresses. But from the start, there was a loose organisation. The concepts of a Communist organisation weren't all met. There was a system of delegates. It was a broad socialist party. They did not think of a revolutionary accession of power.

Q."But didn't they have ideas of effecting a revolutionary take-over and speak of a revolution around the corner and the permanent revolution?" A. "Yes; they spoke of a revolution but had no plan for it".

Q. "Was the organisation cellular?" A. "No, it was an open party. It had been cellular only under the illegal status it enjoyed in the war years.

Q. Hadn't, in fact, the inner core dominated the party? A. "Yes. That in itself was a weakness. There had been no ideological conflicts at the party conferences except for a couple of occasions which preceded splits. As a result there was "no ideological life". Q. I inquired if one of the weaknesses of the L.S.S.P. hadn't been this top-down emphasis and that directives and demands came from the top to the bottom and not vice versa? A. "Yes. But the movement was popular." Everybody was busy. Not bothered that the thinking etcetera came from the top rungs.

Q. "How many were expelled in 1939?" A. "Not many; only about five or six. However this group had formed a broad party called the United Socialist Party". Q. I inquired if

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there hadn't been an attempt around 1937 to form a Social Democratic Party? A. "He had not heard of it".

Q. "Can you tell me something about the Bracegirdle incident?" A. "It was only an incident and not all that important. It brought out the anti-imperialistic aspect [of the L.S.S.P.]. The party had received good propaganda. Q. "What sort of chap was Bracegirdle?" A. "An agitator". Q. "Was he a Trotskyite?" A. "No, a Communist. But this was no problem. He functioned as a disciplined member". Q. "What was his intellectual level?" A. "Not much. Average. He was very active though. A go-getter".

Q. "Who did the writing for the L.S.S.P. in these early years? " A. "Colvin and Leslie". Vernon did some writing at the start but after the arrests he was not in the party. Q. "But didn't he help you to escape from jail?" A. He had left the party by then. Q. But didn't he contest a seat under the party name - Kadugannava - in 1947? A. He had joined Philip. His was a distant link.

Q. "What sort of role did Jack Kotelawala play?" A. He was an activist and would do jobs. He was not all that interested ideologically. In response to further queries Mr. Samarakkody said that he was a very loyal member and came close to the centre; was Secretary for a while. But that meant little. He was in Colombo then as a law student. Q. "How was he as an organiser?" A. He was a practical sort but had made no special impact. He had been very useful in Uva, and came into prominence then. Q. "What about Reggie Senanayake?" A. He was "very good at secret arrangements" and confidential matters. Proved very useful in the war years. He agreed with my comment that Reggie was Harold Pieris' man.

Q. "When you activated and sponsored the estate-strikes around the year 1940 did you seek to hinder the war effort?" A. "Oh, no." The strikes were the result of workers' grievances which the L.S.S.P. took up. They were quite happy if the strikes hindered the war effort but that was "only incidental". They had been drawn into the strikes; the strikes themselves being levelled against the kanganies. Q. "Did you engineer the strikes?" A. "No". Q. I inquired if it wouldn't have hindered the British war effort if they undertook sabotage work and

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whether they had considered the idea. A. Not enough had been done in that way. There wasn't enough planning. Q. "But was it possible to undertake sabotage activity?" A. "Well, if we gave our minds to it. We were away from realities; we were thinking in terms of a broad open party?"

Q. I inquired why the party had not adopted revolutionary tactics. A. They had "not worked out the dynamics". Q. I inquired if there wasn't some wishful thinking as to the possibilities of coming to power through the stream of agitation. A. "Yes. Our approach was infantile. There was a lack of ideological growth. We stagnated in that position" [presumably meaning the position reached in the 1940's].

Q. I inquired if there hadn't been room for the party to anticipate Bandaranaike's cry? A. The SamaSamja leadership was upper and petit bourgeois and did not realise its potentialities. Q. "Taking your own case, weren't your social origins an obstacle to the understanding of the situation?" A. "Yes, definitely. I was not able to see the burning issues. Underneath the language issue is the question of oppression. The little people could not rise because of language problems."

I then turned my attention to the issue of the splits which appeared in the SamaSamajist ranks and inquired after the reasons for the split into two wings (B.L.P. and L.S.S.P.) in 1945? A. It was a left and right differentiation; the younger members against the older, Doric vs Philip. Q. I pointed to the fact that Leslie was one of the older group but was on Doric's side and that there was some hostility between him and Philip. A. This was not the cause of the original split. Both Colvin and Leslie took some time to come over to the thinking of the B.L.P. group. Q. Wasn't the cleavage due to personal factors? A. It was wrong to say that. There were "some personal aspects" [i.e. a clash of personalities] but these were only an "outward symbol of deeper political differences". Philip was against the organisation principles of a Bolshevik party. He "revolted" against the attempt to organise the party on a disciplined basis. He had "dominating tendencies" and this was contrary to Bolshevik organisationary principles. But superficially the struggle appeared to be one between Doric and Philip. Philip had even called Doric a police spy. The Fourth International had inquired into the issue between Doric

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and Philip and given a decision against Philip. But he did not accept this decision.

Q. I pointed to the fact that Philip had objected to the marriage between Vivienne (his niece) and Leslie, and inquired whether this paved the way for the split in 1945? A. Leslie was "the symbol of the correct line". He is "a serious, intensive type". Philip believes in astrology; but this was not known to his comrades then: "we knew only one side of the man; what he is? what his objectives are? were a mystery".

Q. I inquired what led to the merger [into the N.L.S.S.P.] of 1950 and why Philip stayed out [the V.L.S.S.P.]? A. "Again", Philip was against any form of organisation. "On his own he could be his own master. He wanted to dominate. The others who came over were more disciplined". Q. I inquired again what had led them to unite in 1950. A. It was the parliamentary situation that brought it about. There had been an open clash between the two SamaSamajist groups at the Gampaha by-election in 1949 when the B.L.P. supporters had been subjected to physical assault by a group led by Philip. This had given rise to some concern later on. Both groups started worrying about the situation. 'We are all SamaSamajists', had been the predominant thought of the time. Q. I inquired about the number who stayed within Philip's V.L.S.S.P.? A. A very small number. "Just a handful". To a further query regarding, I think, the names of more important chaps who stayed with Philip, he mentioned the names of Basil Silva and Abubaker.

Q. I inquired if the L.S.S.P. decision to oppose the war effort had been worth it from the tactical point of view? A. "Yes, it was worth it. We could not separate our attitude to general politics". Q. "But didn't the Communist Party capture some of your unions as a result?" A. "It did. But our stand during the war was a continuation of politics by other means".

Q. "In the late 1930's and in the 1940's did you have say working-class leaders in the L.S.S.P.?" A. Between 1935 and right up to the 1950's there were working-class leaders. But the working-class membership "suffered because there was no ideological growth". They were just "trade-union bureaucrats". Q. "Didn't the language problem hinder the growth of working-class leaders in that English was the medium used at Central

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Committee meetings etcetera?" A. "Yes. But the attitude of the L.S.S.P. leadership also influenced matters." Q. "Wasn't the leadership far too Westernised and intellectual in orientation?" A. He nodded agreement and added that they had "really a petit-bourgeois outlook" and not a working-class one. They themselves "had put up a barrier". Q. It would appear that on the central committee of the Communist Party 80% were working-class whereas the L.S.S.P. central command has a much smaller element of working-class background? A. "Yes, that's correct. That is due to the origins of the two parties. The C.P. grew on the trade-unions; they concentrated on the city of Colombo and got a working class cadre. We had trade-unions but also had wider interests. The petit-bourgeois layers are much stronger in the L.S.S.P."

Q. I inquired how far they had sought to win support of the peasantry and why they failed in this sphere? A. "We were always conscious of the need to do so. Actually, however, it was the peasant problem itself that was at the root of our failure to broaden our base". The island did not have feudal conditions. Landownership was not feudal; only social relations were; that is, there were remnants of a feudal structure socially. Capitalist agriculture existed. There were numerous small proprietors. "One cannot base a revolutionary peasant movement" on such a structure. Landlessness was not acute at that stage. In response to further queries, he agreed that the anti-headmen cry had helped them at the start but added that, as a weapon for winning popular support, it had "soon exhausted itself" - with the reform of the system. Q. I inquired as to how much attention had been paid to the problem of winning the support of the peasantry? A. The problem was "constantly discussed". What they did was to take up concrete and specific grievances of the peasants: landlessness, rural credit for example. But that was all. There was no class struggle in the countryside and no oppression by the landlords. Q. I challenged the latter statement and asked if there hadn't been much oppression by the aristocrats. A. "Not really". The big man had considerable influence but ...

Q. I inquired about the causes of the 1953 split? A. This split was important. Henry Pieris and William Silva had worked out the parliamentary situation; i.e., worked out the

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statistics. On this basis they had taken an "opportunistic line" and argued that the only way of winning a parliamentary majority was to join [I think he means, ally with] the S.L.F.P. They had argued that otherwise they had no future. This was the same argument that N.M. Perera used in 1960; but in 1953 the "leadership fought that, quite correctly". They had "consciously fought this strong reformist wing". Q. "Oh, it was strong?" A. "Oh, yes; about one-third the party". Q. "And did one-third leave?" A. "Yes, practically one-third left". Some joined Philip. Those who left never came back to the SamaSamajist fold. Q. I inquired if T.B. Subasinghe had been in this breakaway group? A. "Yes, Subasinghe too. But William Silva and Henry Pieris were the principal movers. Q. I inquired about these two. A. William Silva was "never an active member of the party" i.e.; he didn't "do a particular job" apart from public-speaking; i.e. he did not undertake trade-union work. He was intelligent and came to leadership level. Henry Pieris rose from the rank and file. He was a good writer in Sinhalese, a M.P. in 1947. He was defeated in the 1952 elections - a year in which the L.S.S.P. lost heavily.

Q. "Who organised the thuggery against the L.S.S.P. at their meeting on the language issue in 1955 [when they opted for parity]?" Both the U.N.P. and S.L.F.P. The same riff-raff who were behind the language rights. There were no divided loyalties on this point.

Q. I inquired what factors had counted most in his election battle vs Cyril Mathew of the U.N.P. at Gampaha by-election in 1949? It was a rural constituency composed of small landowners. Each of them had got the votes of caste blocks. In Mirigama [in 1947] his eleven thousand votes were caste votes. The identification was open. Q. In view of the fact that you do not have statistical units, how do you know about caste strengths during your electioneering campaigns? A. "Everybody in the area knows". Q. But doesn't the social flux of recent years make this more difficult? A. "Even now" the local people know the details.

End of First Interview

Second Interview, 29 June 1967.

Q. I inquired if Mr. Samarakkody could remember an individual named A. Gunesekera. A. He remarked that Gunesekera was in the party [the SamaSamajist party].

Q. "Oh, he was in the Bolshevik-Leninist Party?" A. "No, this was [his presence in the SamaSamajist ranks] before that. He tried to form a peasant organisation".[1]

Q. "With what success?" A. His party had "an uncertain type of existence". Its headquarters were in Anuradhapura. It "lacked perspectives". It sought to work among the peasantry because the Marxists didn't do much about it; but the question of its relationship with the larger Marxist movement was not worked out.

Q. I inquired whether William Silva and Subasinghe had been in the B.L.P.?[2] A. William Silva was. Subasinghe had been in the L.S.S.P. with Philip and N.M.

Q. I inquired if he could tell me something about the Yamuna talks in 1947. A. He could not remember.

Q. I inquired about his electoral struggle during the 1952 elections. A. He had contested Dehiowita. A proctor named Gunesekera had contested him; and he [Mr. Samarakkody] had won by a majority of 96. In 1956, however, his majority at Dehiowita had been 5,000.

Q. I asked him what factors had operated against him in 1952, to reduce his margin of victory that much? A. He stressed the influence of D.S. Senanayake's death on voters as the major factor in the '52 elections.

Q. I inquired whether the sudden dissolution of parliament had caught them unprepared organisation wise? A. That hadn't affected the issue all that much. The situation was in favour of the U.N.P.

Q. "But wasn't it a fact that the L.S.S.P. had expected to do quite well at the elections?" A. Mr. Samarakkody gave hesitant assent and said that they had not expected to lose "the big seats".

Q. I inquired whether they even had hopes of being able to win enough seats to form a government. A. "No".

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1. This effort on Gunesekera's part was in the immediate post-war years. I believe he was, then, either a member or a fellow-traveller of the Communist Party.

2. This break-away section of the L.S.S.P. existed from 1945-50.

Q. I inquired whether their sponsorship of the *hartal* had been an attempt to recapture popular favour? A. "There was a situation. The party got itself integrated into the struggle which was an anti-Government struggle".

Q. "How did the *hartal* work out?"[1] A. The central issue was the raise in the price of rice. There were numerous other issues such as the increase in train fares.

Q. I inquired where the *hartal* had received support, district-wise? A.It was mostly confined to the Western Province and Sabaragamuwa.

Q. I inquired about the extent of the popular support the *hartal* had received and whether this had fulfilled their anticipations? A. The *hartal* could have been taken further if they had anticipated ~~that~~ the extent of the support they were to get.

Q. What sort of organisation did you have for the *hartal*? A. "Propaganda meetings". The *hartal* was mainly under the sponsorship of the L.S.S.P. at the start [presumably meaning the N.L.S.S.P. as distinct from Philip's group, the V.L.S.S.P.]. There was an united front (of all the Marxist groups) of a kind "only in the late stages". The Communist Party was reluctant. If the L.S.S.P. had "well-defined perspectives", they might have achieved better unity.

Q. I asked him to elaborate on the phrase "well-defined perspectives". A. The *hartal* had been"considered a kind of general strike. They had planned on a two-three day protest. But as it was, it turned out to be a kind of uprising in an embryonic stage".

Q. I inquired if the *hartal* hadn't been strongest in the youth-league areas. A. "Yes, that's right".

Q. Turning to the nature of SamaSamajist youth leagues in general, I asked Mr. Samarakkody if these did not seem to have a fluctuating history, each showing a capacity to stagnate and rise up occasionally? A. He agreed. There was no proper youth-league programme. They did work in the locality but were not channelled towards specific objectives. Their work was largely of an electoral nature, either for local government or general elections.

Q.I asked him what factors had contributed to the change of government and U.N.P. debacle in 1956? A. It had been "helped by the general swing".

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[1] It will be seen that Mr. Samarakkody did not hear this question correctly. He seems to have answered the question: "Why did the *hartal* break out?"

Q. I inquired if he thought that the vote was not so much pro S.L.F.P. as anti-U.N.P. A. He did not answer this directly but seemed inclined to agree in that he said there were "accumulated grievances against the U.N.P." which operated in the '56 elections.

Q. I inquired after the L.S.S.P. intentions in entering into a no-contest pact with the M.E.P. coalition group during the '56 elections; and whether they hoped that the results would create a parliamentary situation in which the L.S.S.P. held the balance of power. A. The no-contest pact was an attempt to gain the maximum possible number of seats for themselves. The party had no intentions of joining Bandaranaike's government.

Q. "If the possibility arose would you have joined the government?" A. It was doubtful whether they would have. The furthest they went afterwards was to take up "an equivocal position in relation to the government".

Q. "Deliberately equivocal?" A. "Yes, deliberately equivocal".

Q. "Didn't you prefer the S.L.F.P. to the U.N.P.?" A."There was that underlying current".

Q. I inquired if the L.S.S.P. stand on the language issue prevented a coalition with the S.L.F.P. A. At that time the party had not thought in terms of any type of parliamentary power.

Q. This led me to ask him whether they were thinking in terms of a radical revolution. A. Their perspectives were that of a mass struggle; and the overthrow of government.

Q. Had this been the basis on which they functioned in previous years, i.e. previous to 1956? A. "Yes, up to '56." It was after that that they changed their emphasis.

Q. I said that if that was so, it would suggest that their militancy had been reduced. A. In 1956 the situation in the country turned the party's face towards parliament. Their standpoint thereafter was one of "responsive cooperation" with the M.E.P. government. They gave "critical support".

Q. "Presumably, Philip's presence in the government was something of an obstacle?" A. "No; it shaped party policy. It gave the government a red colouration", said Mr. Samarakkody, implying that it was viewed as a point in the

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government's favour.

Q. I inquired if they had had any feelers from Philip towards some sort of unity? A. "No; nothing".

Q. I inquired after their relationship with the Communist Party at this time. A. There had been no attempt to strengthen any ties.

Q. I inquired if they had supported the S.L.F.P. at all during the 1956 elections. A. There was no mutual support. There were no leaflets or pamphlets asking people to vote S.L.F.P.

Q. I inquired if they had used their own grapevine and local branches to influence their supporters to back the M.E.P. where no L.S.S.P. candidates ran. A. He believed that that would have happened.

Q. I referred to the general theory that the bhikkhus had helped the M.E.P. and said that what interested me was the extent to which the U.N.P. received support from the bhikkhus. A. They did not have bhikkhu support.

Q. I pointed to the well-known fact that the top hierarchy had supported the U.N.P. in the 1965 elections and said that this suggested that they aided the U.N.P. in 1956 as well. A. They "did not come in". They were not politically involved then and stayed very much in the background.

Q. "In March 1960 why wasn't there a no-contest pact?" A. The party was guided by the situation. The picture of the times was that of a S.L.F.P. party that was on the decline following Bandaranaike's death, a party that was split. The L.S.S.P. had "hopes of winning". This was the time when "parliamentary illusions reached the highest point".

Q. Did the Communist Party make an attempt to form a no-contest pact with the L.S.S.P.? A. The L.S.S.P. tried to do so but the C.P. "slipped out".

Q. "But didn't the L.S.S.P. itself feel that they could go it alone?" A. "Yes, they felt that they could do well".

Q. I inquired if before March 1960 they hadn't altered their policy on the language issue? A. There was "a softening of policy?" They made "an attempt to dilute their position" and took up "an equivocal position" on both the language question and citizenship question. They sought "a formula

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that would enable the old position to be read into it but give scope for other views as well".

Q. I remarked that in Ceylon socialism seemed to be an emotional cry devoid of definite content and that all parties represented themselves as socialistic; and inquired if this did not present a problem to the Marxists. A. Up to 1956 there had been no problem. With Bandaranaike's accession to power, the government had a socialist colouration.

Q. I inquired whether the L.S.S.P. had changed their language policy still further after March 1960? A. In March they were at the crossroads. By July they had taken the turn and linked up with the S.L.F.P. Not only was there a no-contest for the July elections but they were giving each other mutual support and the L.S.S.P. were "calling for a S.L.F.P. government". In response to a further query, he said they had adopted the S.L.F.P. position on the language issue.

Q. I inquired if there had been a hot debate in the Central Committee of the L.S.S.P. on this change of policy. A. The question came up, not as a language issue but as one revolving on the best method of preventing the U.N.P. gaining power; on how to intervene in the elections.

Q. "But wasn't it realised that the language issue was involved?" A. "Yes, that was realised; but it was also seen that the bigger issue was the question of linking up with the S.L.F.P."

Q. I inquired if the fact that Mrs. Bandaranaike was the leader of the S.L.F.P. had any bearing on their discussion. A. It "led to the argument" that the S.L.F.P. was weak as a result.

Q. I inquired if, in fact, Mrs. B. hadn't shown herself to be stronger than her husband and the S.L.F.P. hadn't secured a much stronger position. A. He agreed absolutely.

Q. I inquired what Mr. Samarakkody's stand had been when the question arose around July 1960? A. In July there had been "a serious rift". N.M. Perera said that they must call for the formation of a S.L.F.P. government and Colvin "leaned" towards that view as well. Of the opposing view were Edmund Samarakkody, Bernard [Soysa], Merrill Fernando, Osmund [Jayaratne], Karalasingham and "even Bala" [Tampoe,

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~~1 My notes are not too clear here and I may have got some of the last lot of names in the wrong bracket.~~

~~1 Thondaman and Aziz are the leaders of the two unions which exist among the plantation workers, Thondaman's being far the stronger.~~

I think].[1] Doric and Leslie, together with Colvin, were in-between but their weight was on N.M's side.

Q. I inquired if the split which had appeared momentarily on that occasion hadn't continued throughout the next few years, at least in an underlying manner? A. It was "bound to broaden".

Q. I inquired if it had finally occurred in 1964. A. It had; on the issue of coalescing with the S.L.F.P. government.

Q. I inquired after the numbers in the Central Committee who had opposed a coalition. A. Fourteen people out of forty-four in the Central Committee had been against it.

Q. I inquired if any of the fourteen had taken up a middle position and whether they were with Edmund's party. A. "Karalasingham has gone back. Some have dropped out".

Q. I repeated my inquiry as to whether there was a middle group; A. And the reply was in the negative.

Q. I inquired if the split in the country had extended to the L.S.S.P. in the University campus. I am afraid my notes are sketchy at this point but I do know that I proceeded to express the little information I had on a small L.S.S.P. group on the campus who were disillusioned with N.M. and Company and followed a hard-revolutionary line, and inquired whether he had any links with them. He did not seem to know of this group and, showing interest, asked me when it had come into existence. I answered that I had assumed that the date was 1964. A. "That can't be. We were in touch with the Campus till the 1966 [December '65] strike. At that time there was no such group".

Q. Providing further elucidation, I said that it was connected to some Tony Banda, a Ceylonese with contacts with a young Socialist group in England. This struck a bell in Mr. Samarakkody's mind, a bell which he cast aside as unimportant. We discussed this group at some length. According to Mr. Samarakkody it was a sectarian party attached to a sectarian group under Healey in Britain. In Ceylon their chief target was the L.S.S.P. leadership and they were not so much anti-Government and anti-U.N.P. His own party could not, therefore, work with such a group.

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[1] My notes are not too clear here and I may have got some of the last lot of names in the wrong bracket.

Q. "What is the emphasis of your party[1] [at present]?" A. "The emphasis is more on the working class and away from parliament. It wishes to overthrow the government and set up a workers' state."

Q. "Is there much scope for the party pushing forward on these lines, the working class being in a minority?" A. "Yes, they are in a minority: about two million. But the issue has been explained by Trotsky in his theory of a permanent revolution. This was tailored to suit Russian conditions where the working class were a tiny minority".

Q. "Yes, but does the Ceylonese working class have the proletarian consciousness that was found in the West. Many of them have rural roots and connections?" A. That was true of the working class in the Goonesinha era in the 1920's and 1930's when some workers even had land in their home villages; but it was no longer true today.

Q. "What does this objective mean in terms of tactics? Isn't it possible [i.e. permissible] for the working class to ally with the bourgeoisie, or some of the bourgeoisie - as N.M. and Company have done - and wait till the opportunity arises to take control?" A. "Of course, tactics are important". One could ally with the bourgeoisie and any revolutionary forces that existed.

Q. "After all, doesn't the language issue have a revolutionary content, particularly in the rural areas?" A. He agreed that it did. And one had to fight oppression in all its aspects, including linguistic oppression. However the working-class had to act as the vanguard of this movement and lead the peasantry along to a proletarian state, even though the peasantry were not aware of the issues. N.M. and crowd were not leading the forces but travelling behind them. This was wrong. One had to be in front.

Q. I inquired what his party's relationship was to the plantation workers and the Ceylon Indian Congress. A. Their standpoint was "plain": those who wanted citizenship should be granted citizenship unconditionally. They were against having stateless persons. They were against the Sirima-Shastri pact.

Q. I inquired why they were against the pact? A. It was no

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[1] After the 1964 split a small group left the L.S.S.P. majority and formed the L.S.S.P.(R) i.e. R for Revolutionary wing. They were opposed to the opportunistic changes in policy agreed to by the majority. Bala Tampoe recently replaced Edmund Samarakkody as Secretary of this group.

solution. For instance, they had no objection to allowing any number of those wanting to go to India to depart. But the pact was a bargain in the context of oppression of the Tamil minority. Apart from the technicalities of the pact, the Tamils had to confront a policy which "made it a hell" for them here [in Ceylon]. There were "objective conditions leading to compulsory repatriation".

Q. "Do Thondaman, Aziz and crowd[1] oppose your party's work among the plantation workers?" A. They were working through Aziz's union. They had a separate cell but nothing to talk of at the moment.

Q. I inquired what his party's stand had been in late 1965 when C.P. De Silva and others crossed over from the coalition government. A. Their policy had been one of "irreconciliable opposition" to a coalition government; i.e. not one of mutual support. They "were willing to bring the government down". It depended on the issue.

Q. I inquired what the issue was then [i.e. on that occasion] and why they voted as they did against the government. A. The Throne Speech had been reactionary. There was the proposed take-over of the press, the Sirima-Shastri pact and the proposal to make Buddhism a state religion. Hence, they were against the government. It was nevertheless a difficult question.

Q. I inquired if they faced similar dilemmas when trade-unions sprang wild-cat strikes: whether to wash their hands of them or to lead them. A. "Yes". They would generally lead them unless they were communal strikes.

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1. Thondaman and Aziz are the leaders of the two unions which exist among the plantation workers, Thondaman's being far the stronger.

Unrecorded and Confidential Information provided by Mr. L.J. de S. Seneviratne, 15 August 1966.

When I remarked that Civil Servants had no proper training, he disagreed. As a Cadet in Matara he had had G.S. Wodeman as A.G.A. Everybody had sympathised with him when they heard of this and said that Wodeman was difficult to get on with and a thorough martinet. As a matter of fact he had got on very well with Wodeman and received a splendid and thorough training. Wodeman had taken him on every circuit; also confided in him a lot, to the extent of making remarks about other subordinates. Wodeman was a thorough man and wanted everything done just right and at the proper time and place. This had had drastic results on his marriage. I inquired whether Wodeman was a perfectionist. After some reflection, Mr. Seneviratne agreed. I inquired whether Wodeman had an unfortunate manner which put people off. As far as I recall, Mr. Seneviratne felt that this was so though he had got on well with him. When eventually transferred to Jaffna, Mr. Seneviratne had Schrader as G.A. and Schrader remarked that he had met Wodeman a week before and when talking about L.J. de S. Wodeman had simply said, 'I taught him everything'.

I added that what I meant by lack of training was lack of plan, the training varying according to the A.G.A. or G.A. one was under. Mr. Seneviratne remarked that that was the plan.

He felt that one could get 'a fair deal' under the British.

I remarked that I was interested in Land Settlement work. He said that he had been nine years in that department and enjoyed it thoroughly. He had got to know the people as a result, a knowledge which he lacked because his education had been at St. Thomas. One of the present Settlement Officers had told Mr. Seneviratne that his (Seneviratne's) name was the only name which had been specifically mentioned in one of the annual Administrative Reports of the 1930's. Mr. Seneviratne thought that present day settlement work had deviated a great deal from the objectives of the 1930's. I remarked that L.S.O's and A.S.O's got to know the people better than G.A's and A.G.A.'s. He agreed wholeheartedly; the G.A's and A.G A's had the whole weight of the official hierarchy intervening.

I remarked that I was interested in the L.D.O. of 1935 and Senanayake's and Brayne's ideas. Mr. Seneviratne remarked that he had played a large part in formulating this Ordinance. Senanayake used to come to him because he knew that they thought alike and trusted L.J. de S. Thus, many of D.S's papers were written by 'an insignificant character called L.J. de S. Seneviratne', according to Mr. Seneviratne. He said that Senanayake rarely read administrative papers, etc. but preferred to discuss them. I remarked that it was his habit to present his views and rely on his (Ceylonese) lieutenants to put it into suitable English. Mr. Seneviratne implied that he was one of the inner group. I asked about C.L. Wickremasinghe. He gave a qualified, 'yes'; adding that C.L. and D.S. did not always think on the same lines and was therefore not quite a member of the inner circle. Sir Richard Aluwihare was. 'What about A.G. Ranasinha? He was taken to London by D.S.', I inquired. Mr. Seneviratne said that D.S. had wanted him (L.J. de S.) to come but he could not be released; in effect stating that A.G. Ranasinha was reserve. He agreed that Ranasinha was one of the lieutenants like C.L. but implied that he was never one of the inner group. 'He had his own ideas'.

D.R. Wijewardena, D.S. and Co. had in these days been making an effort to emphasise the manner in which the Sinhalese had suffered in 1915 and the way they had personally suffered. D.R. had handed him a bundle of papers on the subject. I inquired whether they were trying to make political capital of the subject and the fact that D.S. etc. had been jailed and Mr. Seneviratne agreed. While on this point, Mr. Seneviratne stressed that it was confidential: 'don't you dare publish it'. He was especially particular about the secrecy of the point that D.R. and Co. had been circulating papers on the subject which were meant to stimulate the younger set.

He remarked that my father (T.W. Roberts) was "rather aggressive". He also added a question: "He must have been involved in a number of affairs"? I was not quite certain whether this referred to administrative contretemps or flirtations. Probably the latter; possibly both.

When the Needham University Commission Report had come out, Banda had met him and said, "I read your dissent. I am inclined to implement the dissent rather than the report".

M.W. Roberts,
16/8/66.

Unrecorded and Confidential Information provided by L.J. de S. Seneviratne, 27 October 1966.

Banda had kept calling Sir G.S. Bajpie, 'Sir Jirga' till eventually Bajpie had intervened and told him that his name was 'Sir Girja Bajpie' whereupon Banda had said, 'My apologies, Sir Jirga - I beg your pardon, Sir Girja'; and turned round and said loudly to L.J. de S. 'Don't you think it will be better to call him Sir Shankar'.

I inquired about Huxham. He said that on one occasion Huxham had been effectively quashed by Banda when they were together in India on this delegation. Banda had turned to him (Huxham) and said 'I say, what were you doing with the lady in the green dress last night?'

It would appear that the Ceylonese delegation had agreed partially with St. John Jackson's report. Their policy towards the immigrants was that they did not want any more. Huxham represented the views of the European Planters. Banda in particular was inclined to take an independent line. [On the whole I got a very confused picture of the policies of the Ceylon delegation on the immigration issue.] Later an Indian delegation came to Ceylon. Sir Robert Drayton had drafted the final report. D.S. had turned this over to L.J. de S. to make modifications. I inquired whether any major alterations had been made. The answer was not specific or clear but I gathered that they were determined to bring the Ceylonese influence to bear. 'We were not going to let them [the European officers] have their own way'.

M.W. Roberts
28/10/66

Conversations with R.K. Somasundaram (L.D.O.), R.S. Dayaratne (D.L.O.), and Ivan Samarawickreme (G.A.), 23 August 1966.

Rama Somasundaram agreed that there was much political interference in the field. Land Kachcheries were virtually run by the politicians rather than by the District Land Officers. He agreed that allottees who broke the conditions of tenure were not evicted etc. because of the possibilities of political trouble. He added that the irrigation rates of Anuradhapura district had not been collected for years, though the colonists were relatively affluent.

I inquired why the colonists voted against Government - whichever Government was in power. I do not recall whether he answered this question and as far as I remember it was at this point that he criticised 'advanced alienation', implying that this was the cause of such behaviour. 'Advanced alienation' (i.e. accelerated alienation of lands without the planned and prepared allotments of earlier years, begun under the Bandaranaike regime) had been a total failure. The colonists got into trouble and into debt. At the present moment his department concentrated on having houses ready before the colonists arrived but actually irrigation was the be-all and end-all of their problems; without wells and channels they had a well-nigh impossible task.

I asked what sort of Minister, C.P. De Silva was. He made it clear that his opinion of C.P. was pretty low. I inquired whether C.P. was opiniated. He answered in the affirmative, in a quite decided manner, adding that C.P. thought he knew everything; the trouble was that he had been too long in charge of that Ministry. I inquired whether in recent months he was going downhill, intellectually speaking. He said that C.P. put in quite a lot of hard work and sometimes continued conferences till 2.00 p.m. But while there was much talk and discussion even such long sessions often showed few results or concrete decisions at the end of it. C.P. sometimes brought up irrelevancies and concentrated on them. He agreed with my comment that the Ten Year plan of 1956(?) was unrealistic. The trouble too was that C.P. had built up 'a personal empire' within the Ministry. Caste and political creed intruded.

R.S. Dayaratne said that the Paddy Lands Bill was in conflict with the L.D.O. The former was being implemented. But it had been found that many L.D.O. allottees let out a portion or the whole of their land. If these tenants were made the owners as the former bill stipulated for ...

Ivan Samarawickreme: 'generally speaking, he did not agree with Farmer'. The trouble was that such men had no grounding in local knowledge.

He was opposed to the attempt to end sub-division of the land; sub-division was alright 'up to a point'. It meant that the descendants would resort to more intensive cultivation. But as far as colonists were concerned, there would be a point in the second, third or fourth generations when they could not longer sub-divide.

As a matter of fact, for all the conditions stipulated there had been a lot of *de facto* sub-division between the descendants of allottees. There was also some *ande* and leasing and sub-letting of the land. This was particularly pronounced in the case of the Ex-Servicemen's colony; I think he said that many of them were absentee-landlords. In many ways the L.D.O. was 'antiquated'.

I inquired whether it had not succeeded in preventing the land from falling into the hands of land-sharks. He was quite positive that it had been successful in this objective. There was a small percentage where this had happened but not such as merited concern.

He did not think that with their know-how and management the peasants could cultivate rice with maximum efficiency. The Israelis had commented on this. In fact in the 1930's Kennedy (Director of Irrigation) had asked whether it was not better to buy the cheap Burma rice and concentrate on tea exports etc. But of course, they were not thinking of 'social justice'. Colonisation schemes had definitely provided employment to many; had also eased congestion.

In his experience in R'pura (in response to query) *tattumaru* contributed to non-improvements in agriculture. Manuring etc. produced results in long-term sense. Thus chaps were reluctant to manure (In effect he disagreed with Farmer and Leach.) *tattumaru* lands.

M.W. Roberts
24/8/66

L.D.O. in the body of this note refers to the Land Development Ordinance of 1935. R.K. Somasundarum is a Land Development Officer whose tasks pertain to the clearing and preparation of land for colonists, etcetera. R.S. Dayaratne is a District Land Officer, a class of staff officers who were specially created to implement the Ordinance of 1935. Both Dayaratne and Somasundarum were my compatriots in the Peradeniya Campus in the late 1950's. Mr. Ivan Samarawickreme is a senior G.A. at present stationed in Polonnaruwa. The conversation took place at a friend's wedding.

Comments on Interview with K. Somasuntharam, 16 May 1966.

Quite hale and hearty Kandiah Somasuntharam's memories were quite fresh. He was clearly happy to go on record and pleased that he could air his views in the knowledge that all this meant that his role in the Island's history was not going to be forgotten. It is significant that he had been intending to write his memoirs. While thus having a degree of self-importance common to many human beings, he also displayed a vigorous mind, providing useful and discerning evidence on many points. Aware though he was of the tape-recorder he was rarely inhibited in his criticisms even of individuals, though he was perhaps more cautious when it came to events of the 1950's.

His attitude to British Civil Servants and British rule was very much that of a Ceylonese and his use of the word "imperialist" is significant. Let me hasten to add that he was far from being a fierce critic. His outlook was that the British were not greatly sympathetic to Ceylonese aspirations, that on some issues considerations of British trade were paramount, that they sought to maintain law and order and to keep things running smoothly but were rarely "progressive", but that all this was to be expected and a product of their background. How far this was an attitude of his later years rather than his younger days I am not prepared to say. It is of relevance that he was the first Ceylonese allowed to enter the inner sanctum of the C.C.S., the Secretariat, once the Administration was forced to appoint Ceylonese to such posts. This would suggest, as he himself did suggest, that he was trusted and was considered the least likely to give trouble. But his views today indicate that he was far from being a stooge. In any event the information on his three years in the Secretariat was very valuable and I spent some time on this period.

At the same time he did not conceal his opposition to universal franchise or his dislike for most of our politicians, particularly those of more recent times. Being a Tamil it is also obvious where his partialities lie though he is far from being a rabid one or in favour of the "fifty-fifty" cry. His information on the rising communal split of the 20's was very meagre but he did suggest that it was the Tamils who "set the ball rolling" in originating the beginnings of cleavage.

His experience in revenue administrative matters, it so happened, was highly limited. A glance at the posts he held will show that, apart from his initial period of training, he held such posts only in the period 1929-1932. For the rest his was mostly desk work in the Secretariat or the Ministries of Labour, of Commerce and of Industries. As a result I could not pursue such aspects as chena land policy, Brayne's scheme of protected tenures, the influence of the headmen system on the 1931/1936 elections and so forth. Most inquiries under these heads brought little concrete, as one would expect.

He made some interesting comments on some individuals under whom he served. I do not know how to rate his appraisals but he did provide useful sidelights (e.g: Tyrrell's "patronising" attitude, Millington's fussiness, Balfour's impracticality). From what I've heard elsewhere (e.g. C.E. Tilney, T.F.C. Roberts) I think he rated Periya Sundaram much too highly.

There were a few occasions when he elaborated on a minor point or on some exploit of his at some length. From hard-earned experience I think I am now less prone to prompt and to intrude with positive comments of my own; i.e I am handling the interviews better and drawing out or awaiting comments rather than forcing mere affirmatives and negatives. As in many interviews, however, I was mentally fatigued pretty early on in the interview (while Mr. K. Somasundaram seemed none the worse for it) and I feel that I missed out on some possible enquiries: e.g. attitude of the Secretariat to Goonesinha, the judicial system, the contretemps between D.S. and Edmund Rodrigo, etc. I trust these can be rectified through correspondence.

M.W. Roberts
16.5.66

W.T. Stace's Answers to Questions forwarded by M.W. Roberts, December 1965. *

Walter Terence Stace b. 1886
C.C.S. 1910-1932

October	1910	Cadet C.C.S., attached to Galle Kachcheri
March	1912	O.A., Galle
May	1913	P.M., Chilaw
February	1914	P.M., Gampola
May	1915	Acting P.M., Kandy
September	1915	Private Secretary to Governor and extra Asst. Col. Sec.
December	1916	Asst. Censor
May	1918	Censor
April	1920	D.J., Negombo
January	1922	Asst. Sett. Officer
March 1926 to November 1926		Acting Sett. Officer
October 1927-June 1928		Mayor, Colombo

Letter from W.T. Stace - M.W. Roberts

I am so glad to hear that the Asia Foundation is financing your project. And I think your project is admirable and I hope it achieves the success which it deserves.

I have greatly enjoyed the process of answering, or trying to answer, your questions, and I am sending you my answers with this letter. This has helped me to recall to memory many pleasant experiences and my very pleasant life in Ceylon. But you must bear in mind two things (1) it is all so long ago that one has forgotten a great deal and (2) that being now nearly 78, I find my memory failing anyhow.[1] Worse still, I may have remembered wrongly, but I hope not much! I look forward to seeing sometime what you have written.

You may get more information from Newnham than from me, because he has always kept full notes and diaries, whereas I, being more happy-go-lucky, never kept any records!

---

* This is a retyped version. It was originally typed in elite and copies in London and Oxford are in that form.

[1] In these circumstances and given the overwhelming number of questions I burdened Mr Stace with, it is not surprising that his answers are brief.
His answers should be matched with his MSS autobiography (at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, London) written in the 1950's. He is far more 'attacking' in the autobiography. Here, he tends towards the 'defensive.'

1. What made you choose government service as a vocation and the C.C.S. in particular?

Answer:
Several generations of my family served the British Government in either army or civil service. I merely followed suit.

2. Would you have preferred the I.C.S.?

Answer:
Yes, and I had that choice. See chapter 6 of my autobiograp

3. Did Ceylon hold any particular attractions?

Answer:
No.

4. With what feelings did you set out?

Answer:
Sorry for myself!

5. Did you feel that you were going to 'a land of the second-rate', a social 'desert'?

Answer:
No.

6. Do you think this was generally felt among civil servants?

Answer:
I do not know.

7. If so did it not breed cynicism and a degree of indifference?

Answer:
No.

8. Would you say that cynicism prevailed to any extent in the C.C.S.? Can you cite examples?

Answer:
No. Members were generally satisfied and happy. Why should they be cynical?

9. How did you, personally, take to the solitude of work in the outlying posts?

Answer:
I never, except for one week, had a job involving complete/ solitude.

10. Did public school life in England fit you for this sort of thing?

Answer:
Yes; that was to some extent what the public schools aimed at.

11. Did it have any bearing/influence on the pragmatic approach so characteristic of British colonial rule?

Answer:

In contrast to the Americans, the British have always thought that what was required was a humanitarian education to fit a man for ruling human beings. Official techniques would be better learned on the job.

12. What about university life? Did it fit you for colonial service in any way?

Answer:

Reply similar to question 11.

13. Did this upbringing not conduce towards a separation from the mass of the people? i.e. Were you not close to the villager yet so far? - a vast social gulf?

Answer:

On the contrary, a <u>humanistic</u> education should yield understanding and sympathy.

14. In British political terms, what was the prevailing shade of thought in the C.C.S.?

Answer:

Can't say. The tendency was to avoid political involvement, and to be neutral.

15. Do you think this would have had great relevance to the handling of colonial problems and day to day administration?

Answer:

See answer to question 11.

16. Was a Labour or Liberal supporter likely to adopt a different attitude to questions - say to the nationalists, to trade-unionism, to principles of land policy?

Answer:

We did not think in these terms.

18. What about religious convictions? Were the majority agnostics? Did this have any appreciable bearing on policy?

Answer:

Religious or irreligious convictions varied. Not much bearing

19. As an Office Assistant were you treated as a dogsbody?

Answer:

No. Certainly not!

20. Would you have preferred your superiors to give you greater responsibility at the outset?

Answer:

No. Not personally. One had to learn.

21. Where superiors tended to pile lots of responsibility on your shoulders was it the result of laziness?

Answer:

They did not do so.

22. Would not some more time spent accompanying the G.A. on circuit have given you a better inkling of what your kachcheri work was about?

Answer:

Yes. More ought to have been done in this way.

23. Was not the general preference for revenue administrative work rather than judicial 'usually' the result of 'an English dislike of the law and a contempt for the proctors'?

Answer:

Don't think so. I at least had no 'contempt for the proctors.'

24. Was it a question of higher status?

Answer:

It was in general more highly regarded.

25. Do you think the British habit of rule by thumb - of pragmatism - sending officers into the country to learn for themselves - was pushed too far?

Answer:

A little perhaps. But this is preferable to a doctrinaire approach.

26. Could there not have been more instruction and discussion?

Answer:

A little perhaps.

27. Did it not leave room for grievous errors, and did it not possibly imprint false notions in the minds of young officers?

Answer:

No. I remember no such results.

28. In the nineteenth century I have found that both Government and individual officials were not always versed in what happened several decades before: i.e. certain orders, rules or discussions pertaining to some revenue or land matter have been totally lost sight of - did this happen in your time?

Answer:

I do not remember such results.

29. Did you find out much about the previous administrative history by reading previous diaries, etc? How far back would one go?

Answer:

Personally I did not.

30. Despite the pragmatic approach would you not say that in the end precedence dominated? Was it not all too often mere routine, even blind routine?[1]

Answer:

Precedence is very important. Routine is routine, and there is a lot of it. It is better that precedents should be followed in routine matters than that officials should try stunts and too much 'originality.' However, where precedent

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[1] This question (part of my general questionnaire) was inspired by Stace's autobiography. One of his major criticisms of British rule was that routine and precedence predominated. 'Blind routine' is one of his phrases!

should be followed and where new ideas should be tried is obviously a matter of personal judgement. No doubt 'geniuses' will be original. But there are not many geniuses!

31. Was there a tendency to preserve the status quo?

Answer:
No doubt.

32. Did the provincial or central H.Q. tend to quash new ideas?

Answer:
Do not remember any such cases.

33. Would you not say that efficiency was sometimes sought as an end in itself?

Answer:
Of course. Why not?

35. Wasn't there a lack of purpose and of drive in British rule?

Answer:
To keep the machinery well-oiled and in running order is a very good purpose. See question 30.

36. Would you agree with the view that Stubbs and Pagden had a highly bureaucratised approach - the clerk's outlook - to problems, concentrating on details and not on general questions?

Answer:
No. Both good men, though Stubbs had a rather limited outlook.

37. Was this so of the Secretariat at other times - i.e. was it generally so?

Answer:
No.

38. Did it have a demoralising influence?

Answer:
No.

39. Don't you think Government was too centralised and that too much devolved on the Secretariat? Was it a bottleneck by the 1910's?

Answer:
I don't see any reason to say this.

40. Was this realised before the Donoughmore Commission arrived?

Answer:
——

41. Were there any occasions when Government destroyed embarrassing correspondence? Do you know of any?

Answer:
Never knew of any, and I don't believe it.

43. Would you say that the non-European civil servants were excluded from the substantive administrative posts and generally shunted into the judicial line?

Answer:
This tendency certainly existed.

44. What were the reasons?

Answer:
The universal wish of those who have power [is] to keep it in their hands.

45. Was it not argued that 'the stability of Government' would be undermined - that local chaps could not be disinterested in local politics and 'could be worked upon'?

Answer:
I never heard this.

46. Do you think this was generally so? Is the argument valid?

Answer:
No.

47. Was it not argued that the Ceylonese civil servants lacked 'independence of character' and the coolheadedness needed in crisis?

Answer:
I do not remember hearing this idea. I think my answer to 44 tells most of the story, though it is possible that individuals may have argued in this way to suit their own interests.

48. In other words their discretion was distrusted?

Answer:
I see no reason to accept generalizations of this kind.

49. What is your opinion on this point?

Answer:
See 48.

50. Was not the principal argument employed, the view that the masses themselves would not accept orders from one of their own number - that 'in the Oriental mind there [ran] a streak of distrust of his own brother and number' - that the people would not believe in their integrity?
51. What is your opinion on this point?

Answer:
I think there is some truth in this. Also the 'orientals' trusted the integrity of the British, although they may have disliked them.

52. But surely both people and officers could only swim if they were thrust into the water? Surely, if this view was maintained self-government was never possible?

Answer:
No doubt.

53. Did these arguments apply against their employment in the Judicial Service too if with lesser force? Were not there several Ceylonese A.G.A's to belie these theories?

Answer:

Yes, I suppose they would apply. Yes, Aluvihare and Jansz were good examples. They were fully trusted by both orientals and westerners. There were no doubt others, but I do not remember who.

54. How, in any event, did these arguments apply to West Indians?

Answer:

I don't think anyone thought of applying them to West Indians. I never heard this suggested or discussed.

55. Was there not an underlying unstated question of status behind all this (in the 1920's as distinct from the 1930's)?[1]

Answer:

I don't quite understand the question.

HEADMEN AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

67. Did you trust the headmen when it came to land matters?

Answer:

In the Land Settlement Department we inspected and checked everything ourselves on the ground so that the village headmen had little opportunity to deceive us.

68. Was there a distinction between the Kandyan headmen and their low-country counterparts?

Answer:

Not in regard to trustworthiness so far as I know.

69. Would you comment on the municipal administration of the 1910's and 1920's.

Answer:

I had no experience of municipal administration between 1910 and 1920. I did not become Mayor of Colombo till much later.

POLITICAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL

78. What was the official attitude to the Theosophists and Free Thinkers?

---

1. This question is not sufficiently clear. The point is that A.G.A's and G.A's were the repositories of power and status and one wonders how far there was a reluctance to give non-Europeans such status.

Answer:

No attitude and no interest so far as I know.

79. Would you say that the Theosophists had 'disordered minds', a blind hatred of everything European and needed to be 'put away and prevented from preaching doctrines which [excited] the East'?

Answer:

I would not say any of these things.

88. Would you maintain that the silence of the masses on political problems reflected their contentment with British rule? Was it rather a case of being inarticulate?

Answer:

Inarticulate.

89. Could the G.A's, A.G.A's and village headmen be said to have represented mass opinion better than the rising middle-class?

Answer:

Don't know.

1915

90. What was the government view on the nature of the 1915 riots?

Answer:

See next few answers.

91. Would you support the theory that the local agents (in Dumbara) of German firms like Freudenberg contributed to the initial riots in Kandy?

Answer:

I do not remember ever hearing of this, and I should think it unlikely.

92. Did officials believe the 1915 riots to be an organised conspiracy against Government?

Answer:

Some individuals may have, but I don't think this was in any way the official view.

93. Did they consider it a Sinhala-Buddhist uprising against Government?

Answer:
No.

94. Did they consider that Sinhala-Buddhist leaders organised the outbreaks?

Answer:
Some may have thought this, but I don't think this opinion had any official standing or credence.

95. Would you agree with the view that the Government suffered from an acute attack of treasonitis (i.e. fears of treason)?

Answer:
No.

96. Why did they arrest certain Temperance leaders?

Answer:
I do not remember the reasons.

97. Do you think initial firmness on the part of the police (a) in Kandy (b) in Colombo might have prevented further trouble?

Answer:
(a) Perhaps. (b) I don't know. I wasn't there.

98. Did the authorities in Kandy show great weakness? Was the G.A. known to be a weak man?

Answer:
This is a matter of opinion. It is always easy to be wise after the event.

99. Would you say that the Colombo Police did not have the training, the backbone or the resources to handle this sort of thing?

Answer:
I would not say this.

100. Do you think martial law was necessary?

Answer:

It is very difficult to say what would have happened without martial law. Things might have been worse.

101. Do you think it was necessary to prolong martial law for three months?

Answer:

---

102. Did Brigadier-General Malcolm's advice have much to do with it?
103. What sort of role did Sir Henry Dowbiggin play? Was it he who advised the arrest of Senanayake and Co.?

Answer:

Not within my knowledge.

104. What influence did Bowes have?

Answer:

I never heard he had any.

105. Would you say that Sir A. Bertram was a weak man?

Answer:

Certainly not a strong man!

110. Would you comment on the popular view that Government panicked and went to extremes?

Answer:

There was no panic. What was done was done after due consideration, whether it was right or wrong.

AGRICULTURE AND LAND

246. What were the purposes and tasks of the L.S.D.?
247. Could you illustrate these points from your own experience?

248. Besides defining what land was Government and what private did L.S.Officers in practice also decide between rival claimants to a piece of private land?

Answer:

I have no written records, diaries, etc. with which to refresh my memory which, at my age, has become very bad. I have not even a copy of the Waste Lands Ordinance in terms of which we worked. However, it could be said that we did in practice, although not in law, decide between rival claimants. We would state our 'decision' and the claimants could accept it and sign an agreement to that effect. Or they could refuse to do so. In that case, since we had no legal power to enforce it, the issue would be referred to the law courts. But wise claimants knew if it came to Court adjudication the cards were stacked against them.

249. Was this in excess of the duties laid down on paper?

Answer:

What paper? The ordinance or the departmental instructions? We were certainly not operating illegally, but I cannot exactly remember where the detailed instructions were.

250. Did L.S. Officers consciously seek to protect both the villager and the village from outsiders and speculators?

Answer:

Yes.

251. Apart from deterring the speculator did L.S. Officers aim at conserving the peasantry in their holdings and helping in their improvement?

Answer:

We did what we could.

252. In fulfilling these aims was there a great degree of flexibility in the methods used - i.e. flexibility according to the different regions?

Answer:

There were different kinds of settlement in different parts of the country, because the problems differed. For example, in Sabaragamuwa every inch of the chenas was claimed, but in the North Central Province the villagers laid no claim to jungle lands. There was also a special kind of settlement in N.W.P. called 'three to one', but I forget the details. I think it meant we allowed three times the area of chenas than the area of the paddy fields. Some Governor had made this promise and we had to honour it.

253. Was there also some variation in emphasis and aim - i.e. trying to preserve the communal features in such areas as Nuwarakalawiya?

Answer:
?

254. Were the Ceylonese land speculators and buyers not unscrupulous in the way they acquired land from the peasants?

Answer:
Not always. Some were scrupulous but I think there were unscrupulous cases.

255. Were these men from the ranks of lawyers, proctors, government servants and established land-owners? Any headmen?

Answer:
Can't remember who.

256. Did you consider that <u>some</u> of the politicians participating in the attack on land policy and on the L.S.D. were also interested in land buying and had ulterior motives? In other words were they hypocrites?

Answer:
Possibly. But I do not remember.

257. Did land speculators and local capitalists have a hand in the alternative policies and methods that were broached by the Kegalla Maha Sabha, the Forest Committee and the Land Commission

258. Were these alternative policies such as would have aided speculators?

258^{b}. To what extent was the political attack on British land policy the failure of the authorities to interpret their policies to the Ceylonese, both educated and uneducated?

258^{c}. Was there ever a popular peasant response to criticism of land policy?

258^{d}. What was the reaction and outlook of the peasantry towards the L.S.O. and his work? Did they object?

Answer:

? ?

259. Did the L.S. Officers grant safe titles to villagers who held land so as to prevent future encroachment on their (the villagers') lands by speculators or influential landowners who held neighbouring lands?

Answer:

If I remember rightly they ultimately got Crown Grants, if they had signed the agreements.

260. Was 'first consideration given to the village claimants before giving attention to outsiders, irrespective of whether the land was planted or not, and [irrespective] of the bona fides of the purchase'?

Answer:

We did what we could for the villagers, trying to help them, but outside purchasers also had to be treated with justice.

261. Speculative claims based on fraudulent purchase were rejected?

Answer:

I do not know what is meant by a 'fraudulent purchase.' But there may have been some.

262. What about those legitimate purchases by outsiders (before the L.S.O. arrived) which were detrimental to the village?

Answer:

See question 260.

263. Were there many such? Or were most claims dubious, if not fraudulent?

Answer:

?

264. Did the L.S.O. keep the interests of the village uppermost in his mind, reserving areas for village expansion and 'settling something on villagers who had sold everything'?

Answer:

We sometimes settled an acre on villagers who had sold everything, and had no real claim except to mercy.

265. Did you have complete freedom in naming the price of the land you were settling?

Answer:

Freedom, but there were customary rates - as low as possible for the villagers, higher for outsiders.

266. Were villagers charged low prices?

Answer:

Yes.

267. What did you consider a low price?

Answer:

I am not sure I can trust my memory, but I believe it was Rs. 15/- per acre.

268. Where speculators were trying to force a favourable settlement or seeking to encroach on village land did you try 'to teach them a lesson'[1] by stipulating a stiff price?

Answer:

I don't think the idea of 'teaching' entered into it - though some settlement officers may have talked that way for all I know. I never heard it myself.

269. Did this sort of treatment and the uncertainty of the prices they were likely to be asked deter speculators in their activities?

Answer:

I don't know.

---

[1] This phrase is part of a quotation from Stace's diaries as a Settlement Officer quoted in Lal Jayawardena's thesis(Cambridge, 1963). Stace's answer is a reflection of his failing memory, a point which he himself stresses.

270. In other words, how effective were the deterrents to the speculator deployed by the L.S.O.?

Answer:

---

271. Could not headmen get round these obstacles post-Settlement?

Answer:

---

272. Did an L.S.O. undergo any training under an experienced L.S.O. on beginning his work?

Answer:

Yes.

723. How could beginner-L.S.O's tell the age of trees?

Answer:

Roughly - at any rate with coconut trees - by the height, and general conditions.

274. Did all L.S.O's have such a knowledge of the vernacular as to enable them to manage without interpreters? How trustworthy were the interpreters? Could they be got at?

Answer:

Knowledge of the vernacular would obviously be different with individuals. Personally I am a poor linguist. I could chatter a little with the villagers while on inspection, but I could not possibly take formal evidence without an interpreter. I knew enough to follow the Sinhalese conversation between interpreter and claimant sufficiently to get the drift of it and, while I might miss some details, I could hardly be deceived in a large way.

275. How was the '30 years occupation' stipulated by law interprete with regard to chena land?

Answer:

If I remember rightly we did not regard chena cultivation as permanent or continuous occupation from a legal standpoint - although it would be taken into account in settlement.

276. Colonel Wright complains that 25 years after he had bought land - after checking on the facts - from some villagers in the Kurunegala area, the L.S.D. claimed that it was Government land and made him pay Government for the land. Could a thing like that occur?

Answer:

I know nothing about this.

277. How did Government delineate areas to settle?

Answer:

I think the settlement officer indicated the area and boundaries roughly on the plan and the Survey Department did an accurate survey of what the settlement officer had roughly indicated.

278. Could not peasant sales 'outpace the progress of settlement'? i.e. damage the village before the L.S.O. arrived?

Answer:

Not clear what this means.

279. What were the changes made following the Land Commission(1927)?

Answer:

Don't remember.

283. What have you to say to H.R. Freeman's charge that the Land Settlement Department was niggardly in its allocation of chena reserves and the Government unduly severe in restricting cultivation outside the reserves?

Answer:

At that time we thought his charge unjustified. I am still not aware of any reason for changing that opinion.

284. What sort of man was Freeman as a G.A.? a man? was he naive and guileless?

Answer:

I did not know him well enough to answer this question. He may have been too simple, but was obviously a man of good will very anxious to help his villagers, whom he really loved. But the question was whether his judgement was as good as his heart.

285. What was the extent of landlessness among peasantry at the beginning of your career?

Answer:

I cannot say. The question seems rather vague and over generalized.

286. At the end of your career?

Answer:

Ditto.

288. Were there not many peasants who were mere sharecroppers? Can you provide a figure or a percentage? Do you consider this to have been excessive?

Answer:

I have forgotten what the phrase 'share croppers' means.

290. How about mortgagee-cultivation? How much of peasant land was under mortgage?

Answer:

I do not know.

291. What was the extent of agricultural indebtedness, say in 1914? then in 1928? then, in the mid 30's?

Answer:

Ditto.

292. What factors, in your opinion, contributed to agricultural indebtedness?

Answer:

If I ever knew, or had an opinion, I have forgotten.

293. Did the Depression affect the peasantry?
293^{a}. Did foreclosures increase?

Answer:

Ditto.

294. Did Government try to ascertain its impact?

Answer:
?

295. Were the laws and institutions pertaining to lands and land sales not far too complicated and sophisticated for most of the rural peasantry?

Answer:
Those who had to apply the laws understood them. One could not expect the villagers to do so, except in a vague way.

296. Was any attempt made, ever, to make matters more tangible to the peasant?

Answer:
We did our best to explain.

297. Do you think Government was too severe in its measures to suppress chena cultivation in such areas as Hambantota? indeed, that the policy was futile in a region which was a sea of old chena and had little or no timber of value?

Answer:
I cannot express an opinion.

298. What was the policy towards chenaing in the Kandyan Highlands?

Answer:
——

299. Was a distinction drawn between the Kandyan Highlands and the lowlands with regard to policy towards chenaing?

Answer:
I do not remember.

300. Was there any improvement in the peasants' access to dry land over the period?

Answer:
——

301. If so was this in spite of or because of British land policy?

Answer:

302. Do you think a more liberalised land-sales policy was called for vis-a-vis the peasants?

Answer:
No opinion.

303. Were the terms of land settlement and difficulties of obtaining credit an effective deterrent to a poor peasant planting up or retaining possession of land settled on him?

Answer:
I see no reason to think so.

304. To what extent did the availability of estate work enable a peasant to 'wait it out' until his smallholding came into bearing?

Answer:
I do not know.

APPENDIX A.

A.1.

In your autobiography you state that L.S.O's merely defined what land was Crown and what land was not the Crown's 'making no enquiry as to who were the true owners' (p. 181); but later on you state that where people had planted up lands without having a title to them you entered into a settlement with them and you write, 'Our business was to decide who was the true occupant who had the plantation, and would therefore be entitled to a settlement by Crown grant' (p. 182). This seems somewhat contradictory to your earlier statement? In this connection I would add that other evidence leads me to think that L.S.O's went so far as to deprive a speculator of land he had purchased from villagers on dubious title for paltry sums and settled the land on the villagers - individually or communally as the situation demanded - and only gave a portion of the land to the speculator asking him a fair price in contrast to the low price charged from the villagers. Is this correct? Questions 260-62, and 264 pertain to this aspect.[1]

Correct
W.T.S.

A.2.

If L.S.O's were doing this sort of thing in practice, was this in excess of their stipulated duties?

A.3.

In relation to Questions 255-58 I would also like to ask to what extent the political attack on British land policy represented the failure of the authorities to interpret their policies to both the educated classes and the people?

Don't know
W.T.S.

A.4.

Again, was there ever a popular peasant response to criticism of land policy?

?

A.5.

What was the attitude and reaction of the peasantry to the L.S.O. in your time?

Quiet acceptance.

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[1] Besides the memorandum-answer below Mr. Stace also made some marginal comments on four of the queries.

Answer to Appendix A.

I worked mostly in Sabaragamuwa and N.C.P. but also to some extent elsewhere.

There is no contradiction in the statements you quote from pages 181 and 182 of the autobiography. If the cultivation was over 30 years (or was it 33 years?) the Crown would have no claim and it would be marked 'private' without enquiry about the owners. But if the cultivation was say 10 years or 20 years old, the planter of it had not prescribed against the Crown. Therefore the Crown still had a claim - it was still theoretically, i.e. in law, Crown land. This meant that we had the power to settle it on whomsoever we found had planted it up. In the case of land with over 30 (or 33?) years cultivation, since the Crown had lost its claim we had no power to grant it to anybody or to decide whose it was, and therefore had no course open to us except to mark it 'private', i.e. to disclaim it. This was not beyond our stipulated duties.

See also my marginal remarks on your question paper herewith returned.

APPENDIX B.

B.1. With regard to the 1915 riots Governor Chalmers stated that it was not politically inspired etc., etc. in one of his initial despatches and you yourself state that it was not 'anti-British', but is it not correct to say that some of the British community regarded it as a premeditated uprising and an 'organised rebellion' against the British?

B.2. How extensive was this feeling? Did many officials hold this view?

B.3. Did Sir Robert Chalmers change his initial views? - In 1916 Bonar Law stated in the Commons that it was a premeditated series of riots aimed at the British. While he was no doubt deploying the most effective argument he could find to defend a Government involved in wartime matters, he could only have done so if such a view had been passed on by the authorities in Colombo.

B.4. On the 1915 issues your standpoint is that both Chalmers and Anderson did what was right in the circumstances. I cannot help feeling that you have been influenced by a natural loyalty to

Chalmers. Even as a general statement it seems lame. I have no doubt that martial law was necessary. I think the indiscriminate arrest of Buddhist leaders can be explained though I have my doubts whether it was justifiable. (It was certainly foolish.) But the main point is: should martial law have been continued for so long? Should some of the officers have been allowed the freedom to organise drum-head court martials while in the mood they were in (mood of putting down disorder with a firm hand and a general sense of frustration at their inability to prevent the sporadic outbreaks)? and finally, was the considered act of levying a fine on the Sinhalese community justifiable? It seems to me to have some similarity to a levy on the Negroes of Los Angelos for the recent outbreak there. Certainly the innocent will suffer with the guilty during action but such a considered application of this principle on a whole community when they could do little or nothing - and could not reasonably be expected to have done anything - to stop the actions of some of their number, seems quite unfair. (And so it was considered by contemporaries!)

B.5. I would like your appraisal of politicians like P. Ramanathan, Ponnambalam Arunachalam, Sir James Peiris and H.L. de Mel?

Answers to Appendix B.

B.1. Possibly.

B.2. ?

B.3. The statement attributed to Bonar Law is incorrect.[1] I doubt if any responsible official told him this. I have no idea what his sources were or whether [he] just said what suited his case.

B.4. I really have nothing to say beyond what appears in the autobiography, except that you may be right in thinking I am influenced by my feelings for Chalmers.

B.5. I did not know them well. Ramanathan was a wily politician, (I mean nothing derogatory by this)and an effective speaker and personality. He was not above playing to the gallery!

Arunachalam was, I thought, an official, not a politician.

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[1] I have subsequently discovered that Bonar Law's statement is a word for word plagiary from a paragraph in the Report of the Police Enquiry Commission (Sessional Paper XVI of 1916) p.viii.

Sir James Pieris I hardly knew. I think he was a worthy, though not very bright, individual.

De Mel seemed very much out for his own hand, but I really forget all details about him.

APPENDIX C.

C.1.

After having made some very interesting comments on the typically British pragmatism in administration you go on to make the criticism that much of what was done was 'blind routine.' I should have thought that, if anything, pragmatism would have reduced blind routine. Not that they are mutually contradictory but that pragmatism makes for greater individuality and flexibility. Thus if the opposite of pragmatism was followed would there not have been more 'blind routine' and greater rigidity? I would appreciate your comments on this aspect.

Answer:

I don't know what comment to make. You may be right.

Mr. W.W. Williams' Answers to a further set of Questions forwarded by M.W. Roberts, 9 February, 1966.

I saw most of the people concerned at a distance. We surveyors - of my generation - had little respect for, or liking, for the "Heaven Born" as we called the Civil Servants. We - along with the Irrigation Dept - reckoned that we knew more about the villagers and the villages than the Kachcheris, but our opinions counted for nothing. The Civil Servants more and more lived in a paper world.

56. There seems to have been a considerable amount of internal friction in the Irrigation Department in the 1920's and even in the late 1920's. Did you come across or hear of it?

Answer:

I should not have thought this very serious. There were some odd characters. Meaden (?) not forceful. Wully Brown - a tough Scot, wayward and not imaginative. Kennedy, brilliant, but unfortunately an alcoholic, and Wilson, whose loss was a disaster to Ceylon. He was able and energetic and fanatically keen, but he didn't try to be tactful with Senanayake and they parted. It was an awful pity. I think it was at this time that the policy of working on small village tanks, or the large schemes like Kalawewa and Minneriya was debated. They used to wrangle about this. I always thought the Irrigation people were a good lot. They had a fairly hard life - nearly as hard as the surveyors!

57. Did you know anything about L.J.B. Turner's attempt to reform organise reorganisation? How did it go down with the Public Service? Is it correct to say that Woods would have nothing to do with it and obstructed him so much as to drive him to resign?

Answer:

No recollection.

58. What did you think of Brayne's scheme of indivisible leaseholds? Was it practicable from the administrative point of view?

Answer:

No recollection.

59. How would you appraise the following: [A list of Ceylon Civil Servants was provided here and Mr. Williams has commented on about half the number.]

Answer:

A number of the men on your list were administrative Civil Servants, and in any review of them and their performances made at this stage, I think 2 general considerations should be borne in mind.

(1) I believe that all of them (and especially the Europeans) entered the Civil Service through The Home Civil Service Examination. From this list, the top people were appointed to Great Britain, the next to India, and then to Ceylon - and, as far as I know to other territories. The consequence of this was that the Ceylon men were not of the highest calibre: their inferiority I think was not in the academic field: I think they were just not big men, and certainly some of us in technical departments with degrees equal to theirs, found a number of them niggling "so and sos".

(2) Their attitude towards the Independence of Ceylon should be seen against a background of the view that "it could never happen in our time". From 1920-1930, or rather up to 1930 no-one believed that things could move so fast, and nearly everybody thought (myself included) that they should not do so. This meant that to most of the people you mention Senanayake and Co. were militant politicians, and Whitehall was much more attentive to them than Ceylon. I do believe this to be a very important point. The conversion of Ceylon officials was rapid - when the realisation of coming events came to us we began to think about it. Some of the Civil Servants that you mention were among the slowest to do so. Their attitudes and behaviour should be seen against this background.

<u>T.A. Hodson</u> Bull at a haystack. No tact, but I believe he was sincere, and he worked hard. But he always upset people and had little sense of humour. I remember he had twice been run in for motoring offences. Soon after the Governor came to Kurunegala on his rounds. Thomas Arthur was organising the group photo, putting H.E. in the middle and reserving a place for himself next to him. "Oh no", said H.E. "I can't sit next to you - if you have one more conviction you will be an habitual criminal". Hodson was furious.

<u>Banks (I.G.P.)</u> I saw little of him after 1926, but heard of him. I should have thought a sound middle of the road man. Of course the police were completely overshadowed by Dowbiggin who gave nobody a chance to use his brain or initiative - or if he did, nearly always backed the wrong horse.

<u>E.T. Millington</u> The typical case of the man who passed 'the Civil Service' exam. Very cautious - I shouldn't have thought his impact was very considerable.
(Please remember that I saw a number of these people from a distance, and heard of them in conversation - or gossip.)
<u>W.L. Murphy</u> C.C.S. and Mayor of Colombo (?). I don't know how efficient he was, but he was a gentleman, and we got on alright with him. I think he was probably a bit gentle.

<u>Sir M. Fletcher</u> My generation in the Depts. couldn't stand him. Remember that when I was very junior he was very senior. But he appeared to us a paper-ridden autocrat, quite inhuman. Through all this I think it must be true that he was not good with people, whatever good properties (if any) he had.

<u>W.K.H. Campbell</u> I used to meet him when he was in the Land Settlement Dept. (Did he not start the Cooperative movement?) He was a country man, and while I think he tried to appear forbidding, he had a real interest in the villagers, and he was able to get to know them. I believe his contribution to Ceylon was real and generous.

<u>H.W. Codrington</u> I should think a good conscientious G.A. No nonsense about him. A gentleman. I can't imagine him in any rough and tumble, but I should have thought that he gave everybody a square deal according to his own standards. I thought him a success.

<u>J.D. Brown</u> (Papaw Brown because of the shape of his head.) I believe he was good on paper, but he had a most odd manner: went barking and getting everybody on edge. Had a prize row with Wullie Brown who became head of the Irrigation Dept. - nearly a neurotic.

<u>Wait</u> Passed me in Sinhalese - so perhaps he was more kind than just! Very fond of Ceylon. An old-world administrator, gentle and I believe efficient, but of course he retired a long time ago. I grew fond of him from the little I saw of him and never heard a word against him.

<u>Maybin</u> I should think of a calibre well above his colleagues. I found him approachable, clear thinking and able. I think it is a pity that he didn't stay in Ceylon, but I rather think he became badly placed for promotion. I understand that he went to Africa.

Hunter (I think a Burgher who became G.A. N.C.P. where I was stationed.) The Europeans couldn't get on with him at all. We felt that he had become 'yes-man' to D.S. Senanayake, especially over dry-zone affairs and the irrigation schemes. To be fair, I believe he was quite efficient, but he had no idea of bringing the best out of people. He certainly never got it out of me.

Egan A nice chap, but his life marred by separation from his wife. I liked him, but I doubt whether he was really very effective. Consciencious [sic]. But his life was scarred.

Brayne Followed the ideas of his brother in the I.C.S. I think he had very good ideas, but little personality. He was a rifleman (private) in the Ceylon Planters Corps and not a very smart one. One day the regular R.S.M. (Coldstream Guards) thought he ought to be smartened up, and said " 'ere, you. What's your name?" "Brayne, sir." "Brain, brain, you ain't go no brain."

Wadia A Parsee, and looked at carefully (by us) as being one of the first non-Europeans in high places. I never worked with him but met him from time to time, and thought him a very reasonable man.

N.J. Luddington North Country, a good mathematician (Durham I think). A really good brain, and very intelligent and consciencious. But he made no concessions to convention and was an almost militant Geordie. I think if he had been a slightly better mixer, and been more willing to see the points of view of others, he would have had considerable influence. I suspect that some people may have thought he was not quite out of the top drawer. It wasn't that: he was over dogmatic and rather humourless - I say that in spite of the fact that I got on very well with him.

V. Coomaraswamy I think he was the first Tamil G.A., and was therefore looked at with raised eyebrows. But I heard nothing but good of his administration. I met him, but never had official contact with him.

Worsley The typical public school Civil Servant. I think he was approved by the Secretariat - a non-controversial figure who went through the motions, and did it pleasantly. I should think he was a good G.A.

Bassett I saw a good deal of him. As Magistrate, Cooperative Manager and land settlement officer he was excellent. A good brain, and a quick one. But I don't think he was a fighter or a campaigner - perhaps not ambitious, which is odd when one realises how efficient he was. He had a light touch and went down very well with the Ceylonese. I should think his impact was much more real than that of most of his colleagues.

Rogerson I knew him well. A kind person, efficient, but the real specimen of the Ceylon Civil Service type - a good brain, but not a big man. Yet I'm sure he was energetic and consciencious, and was a good G.A.

Your list is an interesting one. I heard of some of the other men, but I could only write gossip, and some of it was conflicting.

Mr. W.W. Williams' Answers (1) to Questions forwarded by M.W. Roberts, 26 November 1965.[1]

Letter : Williams - Roberts, 26 November 1965.

Fitzwilliam House,
Cambridge,
26 November 1965

Dear Mr. Roberts,

I hope that these notes may be of some use to you. I should have much enjoyed doing them in slower time, but I have snatched an odd hour and had a go.

You will gather that I both love Ceylon, and believe in the integrity of the British Administration. The two attitudes are reconcilable.

Yours sincerely,
(signed) W.W. Williams

W.W. Williams : b. 21 December 1901
A graduate
Survey Department, Ceylon, 1926 - 1938,
retiring as A.S.P. Surveys.

1. With what feelings did you set out for Ceylon? Did you feel that you were going to 'a land of the second-rate', to a 'social desert'?

Answer:
I was full of enthusiasm for a career in surveying, and thought myself most fortunate that I had been posted to Ceylon, an island which from my reading and discussions had many attractions. It had been described to me by several people who knew it at firsthand - notably Sir Lenox Cunningham, as an island where countryside and people had great charm. I was never inclined to change my mind.

2. What are your impressions of the public service in Ceylon?

Answer:
1926-38 seen at first hand. Of a high order. The aims were

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[1] This is a retyped version. It was originally typed in elite and copies in London and Oxford are in this form.

high, and limited only by the realism of financial considerations. The individuals on the whole were well qualified and well intentioned. As could be expected there were a few exceptions. I think in 1926 we were emerging from a rather dead beat stage, especially in my own (survey) department. Up to this it had been unenterprising as to technology, but not as to the tasks it had been undertaking. I think the Survey Dept. has served Ceylon very well. I make remarks about the Administrative Civil Service later. The Irrigation Dept. was very good, and should not be deemed inefficient because of their modest programme pre-D.S. Senanayake. That was economics. The P.W.D. was good too, and railways good enough.

3. In British political terms (parties) what was the prevailing shade of thought in the public service?

Answer:

Do you mean left and right in British politics? If so, I think it was considered very little. I should think on the whole Conservative.

4. Was their much cynicism in their conceptions of their duties and in their attitude to the local peoples?

Answer:

Of course it varied. There were a few English who in their ignorance thought the Ceylonese an inferior race, but this was <u>very minority</u> stuff. My own recollection is clear; I was told that I was alien to Ceylon, a country which belonged to the Ceylonese, and that I was out there to give service. Of course we talked big sometimes, but I know my attitude was one of friendliness with my colleagues - a friendship which still survives and few things give me more pleasure than having a son of an old colleague sent to my university. Even when it was clear that we were going to be dispensed with we could discuss, and joke about, how Ceylon would get on without us. I would say that there was a negligible amount of cynicism.

5. Was the distinction between the Civil Service proper and the other services extended into social relations? Was there much snobbery and social ostracism?

Answer:

We called the Civil Service proper 'the Heaven born.' They were inclined to be snobbish, even to those of us who had got better degrees at the old Universities. But I don't think this really mattered much, and I think it derived from the time when the Civil Service were Oxford and Cambridge graduates who have succeeded in a competative examination, vis-a-vis technicians who might have worked with dirty hands. Things improved while I was there; Mrs. G.A. didn't try it on so much. We didn't get invited to Government House, but on the whole we were glad of it. Of course a few of the Civil Service people latterly were rather asses. (Please don't ask me to enlarge upon this).

6. If so, did it mar administrative liaison?

Answer:

Not really. We thought the C.C.S. a bit patronising, but we were able to say our piece, and it all went very well.

7. Were there any changes in these aspects during the period of your service?

Answer:

I have referred to this briefly alone, under (5).

8. Would you say that British policy as a whole lacked purpose and drive?

Answer:

Certainly not. If more has been done since, it is because attitudes have changed. The budget set the pace; there was no Income Tax in 1926. The budgets were modest. We had Malaria then. But I do believe that we did a good job. E.g. Roads, Railways, Tanks, Colombo Harbour, etc.

9. Was there a tendency to preserve the status quo and concentrate on efficiency as an end in itself?

Answer:

If you mean 'status quo' politically, so that autonomy was postponed, emphatically no. I think at the top the constitutio was worked fairly. If there was resistance to advance towards autonomy at the lower levels, it really was because we thought the consequence would be less efficiency. This was never at risk in my dept. because in 1926 Ceylonese were being groomed for the top job to which in due course they succeeded: - and deservedly so.

10. How did public servants react to the political criticisms to which they were subject in the 1920's and 1930's?

Answer:

I never suffered from these much, and I don't remember them very well. But on the whole they were shrugged off. I suffered from a nasty attack by Wimalasurendra (quite without foundation) about some surveys that I did for the tunnel survey at Walawala Hudro-Electric Scheme. But they were so wild that I didn't really bother. We all knew that mud-slinging was part of the political game. What was so nice was that it had not the least effect on our close Ceylonese colleagues.

11. Did these criticisms cause some 'demoralisation'?

Answer:

I don't think so at all; perhaps a little discouragement. I expect we had a good moan about it among ourselves.

12. Did not the contempt with which British public servants (and especially the Civil Servants) held politicians in general and those in Ceylon in particular contribute towards these political attacks in that it needled the politicians?

Answer:

Your assumption is too general. In any case contempt is a hard word. Hard hitters like Tambimuttu and Co. were quite nice chaps really, and it was part of the game to overplay their hands. I, personally, resented a situation in which, when I had to discipline an assistant, he warned me that he would have to tell his uncle - father - etc. about it, as if I should care. We British have contempt for that situation and should laugh at it, in our own country. But here again, the situation was a new one. It was time - consuming, irritating etc. to have the politicians interfering in our activities, but I should never use the word 'contempt' in this context.

13. What is your personal opinion of politicians of the time - taking them in general?

Answer:

Let me confine my remarks to a few whom I met, in the first instance.

D.S. Senanayake. A pioneer; ruthless, but trying to be fair; able, not willing to be influenced. Always very Ceylonese. I don't think he was in communication with our way of thinking, and frankly, I don't think he liked Englishmen. But we knew he was a dedicated patriot and we respected him for that.

Kotalawela tried to keep a foot in both camps. A good mind, but a playboy, and he wanted to move the big pieces without doing the chores.

On re-reading your question - you say 'in general'. I find it difficult to generalise - some were clearly careerists, But I think the field was what one would expect. They were, on the whole, people of a kind that I had not met in my everyday life - most of us didn't quite know what to expect. Obviously they had a lot to learn.

14. Do you think the politicians were ultra-sensitive, dominated by an inferiority complex and aggressive as a result?

Answer:

I think there is some truth in this - Yes, it would be my opinion. But not more sensitive than I would have expected. After all, the changes in the political scene were big; a number of these people, to use plain terms, became important overnight. The attitudes of those about(?) them to this change were mixed - there was reason for sensitiveness.

15. What was your reaction to the suggestions of the Donoughmore Commission?

Answer:

My own reactions then, and I still hold to it, was that it went too fast. But don't ask me how it could have gone slower. It could have been arranged, but anything slower than Donoughmore would not have satisfied the Ceylonese politicians.

16. How did you find the change in the practice? Did you find that it made a great deal of difference in your own work?

Answer:

No. We were in D.S. Senanayake's ministry. He was an expansionist, and we were treated well.

17. Who were the Ministers you worked under and what is your opinion of their ability, honesty, etc.?

Answer:

I have referred to D.S. Senanayake before. I regard him as a big man. His responsibilities were new; he was able, wayward. (I would criticise his handling of the Irrigation Dept., from which he drove J.H. Wilson who was a man of outstanding ability and energy.) But on the whole D.S.S. did very well. I think he was the best of them. I think he was ruthless, but he had to be. Certainly the Survey Dept. under him worked quite as well under him as it had done before.

18. Could you provide your own appraisal of the following Civil Servants (since deceased):

Answer:

Tyrrell: Seen from a distance. A paper wallah; not very human.

Wedderburn: I saw a good deal of him. Perhaps too kind. Able, unassuming, no striving after effect. I was one of his admirers, and thought him the best Civil Servant I encountered.

Drayton: No knowledge.

Stanley and Stubbs: Not very impressed; they made no impact on me.

Graeme Thomson: The best Governor of my time. Had a clear mind and sound motives. I know nothing about his attitude to Ceylon politics, but we felt that he was able to direct affairs in Ceylon.

Caldecott: Never very impressed.

Moore: No knowledge.

19. Were Indian events and the decline of British power in India and Ceylon ever discussed by public servants? Did they, in the late twenties and the early thirties, anticipate self-government in their lifetime?

Answer:

Only as news items - not as affecting ourselves or Ceylon. We speculated about self-government. We thought that to grant it in our lifetime would be premature, but on the whole we expected that rising public opinion in India would force the issue - as it did. And we always realised that a Labour government would give way easily.

20. Was it ever feared (seriously) that Indian sedition would spread to Ceylon?

Answer:

See Answer to Question 21.

21. If not, was it considered even as a possibility?

Answer:

Not considered. We thought the Ceylonese treated the S. Indian estate labourers badly by not giving them a vote. (Equally we thought we ought to have had votes as well.)

22. Do you think Bracegirdle was preaching sedition and a dangerous revolutionary (1937)?

23. Why was he deported?

Answer:

He was a nasty bit of work and was rightly deported I think. I don't remember all the details now.

24. Did the fact that he was a former white planter and a British subject challenging British rule influence Government's decision? Was it not a question of a chap letting one's own side down?

Answer:

I think he was an exhibitionist. What happened to him after the incident? I think he was of the same kidney as this Nazi fellow who is now making a nuisance of himself in this country, [i.e. Jordan].

25. Did the planters bring pressure to bear on the Colonial Secretary to have him deported?

Answer:
Don't know.

32. Did your surveying work bring you into touch with the peasantry?

Answer:
Yes, happily.

33. How would you describe the condition of the peasantry that you came into contact with (please specify regions) in 1929? in 1939?

Answer:
It must be 1929 and 1938; I left Ceylon in 1938.
Regions - every province - especially Moneragalle, N.C.P., S.P., N.P., least of all W.P. and Uva.
Living marginally - at near subsistence level. Not working very hard. A 'goiya' growing paddy need work only about thirty or forty days a year. I think the apathy came from a long history of malaria and other diseases. Not ambitious - their attitude 'nikkang.' For instance, I used to have a vegetable garden at my camp which the villagers thought wonderful - it is only what I do here in England. Of course doesn't help. I saw little change between 1926 and 1938; commodity prices stayed much the same. Methods didn't change; the whole idyllic - cum-depressing life went on. Let me say that I found these people quite delightful.

34. Was there a preponderance of tenant-cultivators?

Answer:
Yes, I think so.

35. Do you think there was a great degree of indebtedness among the peasantry?

Answer:
Always I think: they financed themselves on what I think of as a 'panguwa' system with the local mudalalis, etc.

36. Was land-alienation[1] taking place to any appreciable extent in the 1920's and early 1930's?

Answer:

Yes in 1920 and 1930. The Land Settlement Ordinance was in force and was being applied steadily by a special dept. There was a kind of race output between the Survey and Settlement Depts.

37. Did the Depression have any appreciable influence on them?

Answer:

On the estates, yes; not so much on the real villagers and goiyas.

38. What were the objectives of British Land Policy (a) sale of land to planters and capitalists of whatever nationality? and (b) conservation of land in a native peasantry?

Answer:

I think there was a shift of policy during my service. The requirements of the indigenous population were always carefully attended to. I think the British finance companies found it more and more difficult to acquire land for estates. (It may be that they sought far less because they saw independence coming.)

39. Where did the balance lie between these two objectives?

Answer:

In 38 above.

40. Was Government's policy that of trying to place the European and other capitalists 'near enough to the native to influence him, but not so near as to dispossess him'?

Answer:

I didn't think things were ever considered in this way. I never heard of such a suggestion.

41. Did G.A's, A.G.A's and L.S.O's try to prevent or discourage the process of dispossession of villagers which followed private

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[1] I was using this term with reference to alienation of land by the peasants themselves but was not adequately explicit. Hence Mr. Williams has taken it in the sense of alienation by the Crown, land-settlement, etc.

sales of land?

Answer:

Yes; and sometimes it was necessary to save villagers from themselves.

42. What were the aims and tasks of the Land Settlement Department?

Answer:

As set out in the Waste Lands Ordinance?

43. Was it in the power of an L.S.O. to deprive a speculator or planter of land acquired in dubious title and settle it on the villagers if this land was badly needed by them? Was 'first consideration given to the village claimants before giving attention to outsiders, irrespective of whether the land was planted or not, and irrespective of the bona fides of the purchase'?

Answer:

I am not sure, but I think the pattern was this. An L.S.O. decided whether land was Crown or private. If the claims was dubious, terms of settlement were arranged with the private party. I do not think the L.S.O. ever settled disputes in claims between two private parties; these would have gone to the Civil Courts.

The villagers' interests were always paramount in my time.

44. If so, was this done often?

Answer:

See Answer to Question 43.

45. Apart from deterring the speculator did L.S. Officers aim at conserving the peasantry in their holdings and helping in their improvement?

Answer:

They were interested in seeing ownership settled, but I do not think they were at all concerned with subsequent development.

46. Did you consider that some of the politicians participating in the attack on policy and on the L.S.D. were also interested in land buying and had ulterior motives? In other words, were they hypocrites?

Answer:

I have heard it said so.

47. Was there ever a popular peasant response to the criticism of waste lands policy?

Answer:

I think it was welcomed; of course there was bargaining with the L.S.O. Even at the survey stage the villagers were pretty astute at making large claims for lands which they reckoned had a prescriptive claim, e.g. claiming 10 acres for 4 coconut trees, one at each corner, the rest chena!

48. Do you think that the tea and rubber plantations in any district had encroached on land needed by Kandyans to a greatly detrimental extent? If so, can you specify any regions?

Answer:

I think probably did happen early in the century or before. The Kandyan village lands became restricted. As a piece of history however, I suspect that the Kandyans, when the estates were cleared, were pretty thin on the grounds.

49. Was the Survey Dept. able to keep pace with the demands made on it by the Land Settlement Dept.?

Answer:

I don't know which set the pace. I remember that we were ahead of the Land S.D. at one time, which was a bad thing, because the plans were getting out of date. They appointed more L.S.O's and then we got behind.

50. Would the existence of a good cadastral survey from early British times have forestalled many troubles for Govt. and people in the twentieth century?

Answer:

Yes indeed; but there isn't a country in the world that has learned this lesson, and the African countries won't learn it now. They are heading for dreadful trouble.

51. Do you think a more liberalised land-sales was called for vis-a-vis the peasant?

Answer:

I don't think so. In the paddy lands they had as much land as they had water for - often water was the limit. And they hadn't learned, or didn't like, vegetables growing etc. and had no markets for perishable stuffs really.

52. Do you think better credit facilities should have been provided?

Answer:

I don't understand finance. I thought the Cooperative Movement filled the bill.

53. Were marketing facilities inadequate in the areas you are familiar with?

Answer:

I don't think so. I think villagers were exploited by the entrepreneurs. I believe it worked well.

54. Were the peasantry too pampered?

Answer:

Not really, but they were made very conscious of their rights, and they knew all about them.

55. Were the laws and regulations much too sophisticated and intangible for most of the peasantry?

Answer:

I don't think so.

56. What were the shortcomings, if any, in British agricultural and irriguous policy?

Answer:

This is very difficult. There was a financial limit to what could be done. The villagers were apathetic, probably due to their medical history. They were never - or hardly ever - enterprising.

Perhaps the Agriculture Dept. could have been more enterprising with stock improvement - chickens, cattle, etc. But again there were difficulties arising from religious taboos. I thought the Irrigation Dept. a good one - too small perhaps. The Agricultural Dept. ought to have done more missionary work. Their impact on most villagers was nil.

Mr. G.S. Wodeman's Answers to Questions forwarded by M.W. Roberts, 9 February 1966.

Guy Stanley Wodeman, C.M.G.

b. 16 July 1886

M.A. Cantab.

C.C.S. 1909-1942(?)

13 Nov. 1909	appted. to C.C.S.;
13 Dec. 1909	attached to Colombo Kachcheri;
24 Jan. 1910	Extra O.A., Kandy Kachcheri;
28 Oct. 1910	Acting O.A., Ratnapura Kachcheri;
1 Feb. 1912	P.M., Matale;
1 April 1913	Asst. Com'er of Excise (Colombo);
5 June 1913	Asst. Com'er of Excise, Southern Division;
1 Jan. 1914	Asst. Com'er of Excise, Central Division;
16 April 1915	A.G.A., Kandy
23 June 1915	Special Com'er for the C.P. as well;
16 Aug. 1915	Acting A.G.A., Matale
2 Sept. 1915	Assistant Censor; Addt. Com'er of Requests & P.M., Dumbara as well;
10 April 1916	A.G.A., Trincomalee;
18 Oct. 1918	A.G.A., Colombo;
5 Dec. 1919	A.G.A., Nuwara Eliya;
15 May 1921	On leave;
13 Dec. 1921	A.G.A., Kegalla;
3 March 1923	A.G.A., Matara;
29 April 1925	Deputy Collector of Customs;
9 March 1926	On leave;
13 Sept. 1927	Excise Com'er;
20 July 1930	On leave;
28 Nov. 1930	G.A., S.P.
1 Oct. 1931	Deputy Collector of Customs
25 Nov. 1931	Principal Collector of Customs & Chairman, Colombo Port Comm.;
3 Dec. 1934	Acting Deputy Chief Sec.;
8 March 1935	Resumed duties in Customs;
12 June 1935	Acting Deputy Chief Sec.;
2 Nov. 1935	Resumed duties in Customs;
28 Oct. 1936	Acting Deputy Chief Sec. and Registrar of Aircraft;
28 Jan. 1937	Acting Deputy Chief Sec. and Registrar of Aircraft;
26.5. - 29.6.1937 1.7. - 15.10.1937	Acted as Chief Sec.
27 April 1938	Acting Chief Sec.
11 Aug. 1938	Officer Administering the Govt.
*29 Oct. 1938	Resumed duties as Deputy Chief Sec.
? ?	Acting Chief Sec.
23 Oct. 1938	Acting Chief Sec.

I have looked through your 83 questions, and I am really not able to answer most of them in detail at this stage.

I. As a Cadet and an O.A. did you find that the older Civil Servants tended to treat you with scant respect and a kind of amused tolerance? Would you have liked greater responsibility than that which was given to you? Were you treated as a dogsbody?

Answer:

I received valuable tuition and advice from older Civil Servants when I arrived in Ceylon as a Cadet, and I had quite enough responsibilities. Indeed I was acting as a P.M. within 6 months of my arrival.

2. Did the British habit of empirical training - sending officers out into the country to learn for themselves - hold true in your case? Could you have done with more training and discussion? Without wishing to overstress the uses of theory, do you think courses like those they subsequently had in Oxbridge would have helped you?

Answer:

It is possible that a further year at the University such as the I.C.S. successful candidates had, would have been useful, but not having any experience of the courses followed in that year, I do not know.

3. Did you feel that there was too great a reliance on precedence and that routine dominated administration to an undue extent?

4. While in the field did you feel that provincial or central H.Q. tended to be obstructionist and unreceptive to new ideas?

5. In the period pre 1931 did you feel that, in matters large or small, there was a *tendency* to preserve the status quo and a policy of *quieta non movere*?

6. In this same period did you feel that there was a lack of purpose, drive and imagination in policy, particularly in the sense of ultimate ideals? Was there a tendency to seek efficiency as an end in itself?

Answer:

No.

7. Due to pressure of business was the Secretariat a bottleneck by the 1910's? by the 1920's? If so, why wasn't anything done to solve this problem?

Answer:

I had no service in the C.S.O. In the field I did not find them obstructive.

10. How competent were the vel vidanes in maintaining and repairing village tanks and small irrigation channels?

Answer:
Vel vidanes were useful.

11. Did A.G.A's have to keep pushing vel vidanes and gansabhas to ensure that their work was done?

Answer:
No answer.

12. How useful were the village tribunals? If useful, in what way?

Answer:
So were Village Tribunals.

13. Did the villagers prefer the Police Courts to the Village Tribunals?

Answer:
Villagers probably preferred the Police Courts.

14. Do you think the people corrupted the Courts in that they used them as instruments of revenge and oppression?

Answer:
False cases were <u>very</u> common.

15. Did the British bring law rather than justice?

Answer:
No.

16. Where the majority of land disputes were concerned could a Magistrate or Judge on the bench get to the heart of the matter without having all the village deeds before him and without knowing the configuration of the land?

Answer:
Yes generally speaking.

17. In this sense would it not have been more ideal to put a Civil Servant in charge of a smaller territorial unit and provide him with judicial and executive powers in the former Indian and Ceylonese tradition rather than having larger territorial units with two Civil Servants handling judicial and executive duties separately?

Answer:
No.

18. What were the current (1920's and 1930's) criticisms of the village headman system? What are your views on the subject?

Answer:

Personally I thought the headman system was the correct method of administration and had little to criticise. A good Chief Headman kept the subordinates up to the mark.

19. Have you any idea what motivated the Ceylonese politicians' attack on the headman system?

Answer:

Ceylonese politicians considered the system undemocratic.

20. Did you think that the politicians of your time suffered from an inferiority complex which stimulated aggressiveness? Did many of them have an exaggerated sense of self-importance?

Answer:

... and sought to get more influence and power in their own hands.

21. What sort of bodies were the temperance societies of the first few decades of the 19th century? Were their meetings political meetings under the cloak of temperance?

Answer:

There was evidence that the "temperance" society meetings were political.

23. What was the Government view on the nature of the 1915 riots? Did they consider them an organised and premeditated uprising against Government? If so, why?

Answer:

The 1915 riots were largely due to economic factors - and dislike of the moorish trader and moneylenders.

I have torn up the remainder of my jottings because I am sure they are of no use to you.(a) The Riots of 1915 were communal and not anti-

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(a) Questions 21-52 cover the 1915 riots, Goonesinha, the Ceylonese politicians, the 1924 Constitution and the Donoughmore Commission. He must have considered his notes on these inadvisable.

European or anti-Government. There was some evidence that they were organised through the so-called Temperance Societies - but they are fully documented and I have nothing to add. I know of no criticism of E.F. Marshall and I have not read Sir P. Ramanthan's [sic] account.

53. Did heads of departments attend their respective Committee meetings?

Answer:

Yes.

54. What was the relationship between heads of departments and Committees like?

Answer:

I had no difficulty at all - so long as full and frank information was given I found the Committee cooperative.

55. What were the relations between the 3 Officers-of-State and the Ministers like? Was there much friction at the outset? Why?

Answer:

Differences of opinion perhaps but not friction,

56. What is your opinion of the administrative ability of the new Ministries (those with which you were familiar)?

Answer:

Ability of Ministries varied as you would expect with the capacity of the Minister. Some were excellent and some mediocre and some very poor.

58. Can you recall the Suriya Mal Campaign? Was this taken seriously and resented by the European community?

Answer:

No. Never heard of it.

I am sorry I have neither the time nor the energy to deal with the rest of your questionnaire which I return herewith.